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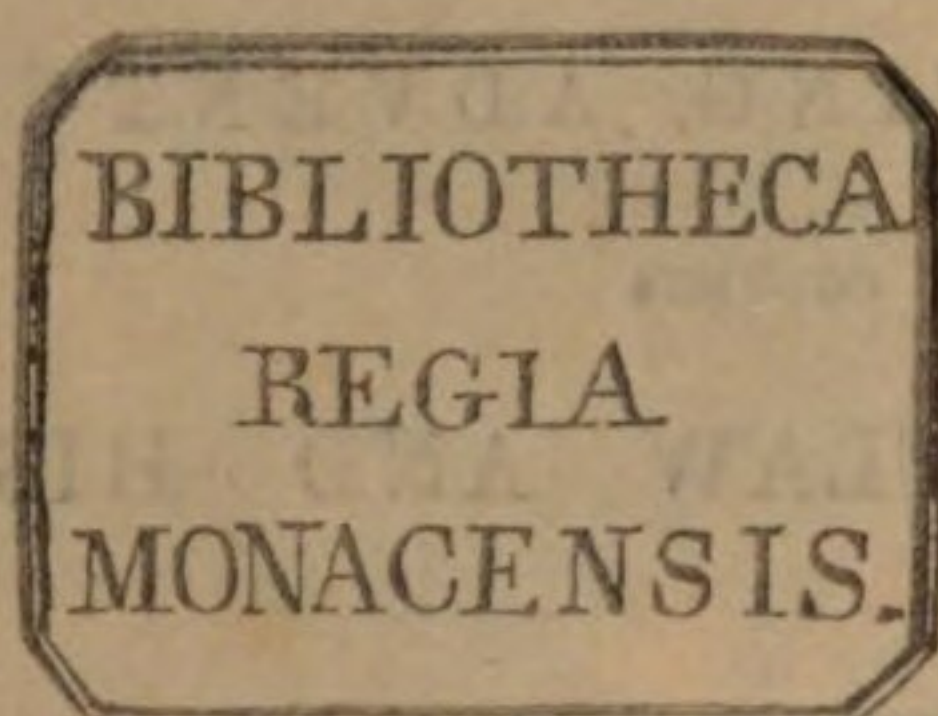


THE LIFE AND EXPLOITS
OF
ROBIN HOOD !

BEING
AN ENTIRELY NEW COMPILATION OF
THE SURPRISING ADVENTURES
OF THIS
CELEBRATED OUTLAW AND HIS MEN;
TOGETHER WITH
A CRITICAL DISSERTATION
ON
THE CAUSES OF HIS POPULARITY
AND THE
CREDIBILITY OF HIS RECORDED ACTIONS.

BY WILDWOOD NEVILLE.

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MAY BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.



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Preface.

DURING an age like the present, when not a few are of opinion that the liberty of the press is verging towards licentiousness, it is presumed no apology can be expected for presenting to the public a New Version of the Exploits of one whose name for centuries has been one of our "Household Words." On the contrary, when it is considered that the name of ROBIN HOOD—without any public monument at the hands of the great, or other appliances usually employed to ward off oblivion—still continues to survive, it is rather a matter of surprise that so little has been done to unravel his history, in order to exhibit a full-length picture of one whom the voice of the people has decreed to be immortal. Such a task, if now at all practicable, has by no means been attempted in this volume. All that has been contemplated here, is simply a compilation of the exploits and portions of his life which the bards of earlier times have endeavoured to preserve.

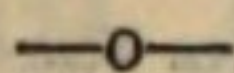
The volume of ballads termed "Robin Hood's Garland" has been hitherto nearly the only work from which the public of the present day has derived its acquaintance with the character now under discussion, and these it is well known from their obsolete phraseology and antiquated style are not adapted to the taste of the reading community, with whom even good poetry, to use a term in general use, is below par.

What has been long wanted, as a substitute for the Garland, is the matter it contains re-modelled, amplified, and embellished, so as to give life and reality to the characters represented: and that in such a manner as neither to be too extended, and therefore voluminous and expensive; nor too much abridged, and therefore wanting in detail and incident.

Such were the views of the compiler when he resolved to publish a new prose version of the deeds of this distinguished character. How rightly he judged of the wants of the community in this particular, and how far he has succeeded in the execution of the plan proposed, are questions which a discerning public alone can determine. It is not for the writer to magnify the difficulties that have attended this undertaking, these will be obvious to all acquainted with the nature of the task, for such persons will know that the original materials are in a form as different as possible from that in which they were required to appear; and being written by persons acting independently of each other, it was nearly impossible to avoid sameness and repetition.

This danger at least the compiler fully perceived at the commencement of the work, and he trusts his endeavours to avoid it have not been without success. He has, however, been more anxious to produce a volume that will be read by the multitude, than to avoid a few brilliant dashes of adverse criticism; and his most sanguine expectations will be realised when he is told, as he ventures to hope he may be, that he has produced a popular readable volume of Robin Hood.

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LIFE AND EXPLOITS OF ROBIN HOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE POPULARITY OF ROBIN HOOD.

IT may be considered an established principle in the history of man, that whatever recommends itself strongly to the sympathies of the mass of the people, has something in it essentially good. The character of the subject of this volume belongs to this class. Style him an outlaw, a robber, or whatever we please, there is an ingredient in the character of bold Robin, which mankind have, as it were, by common consent agreed to like. Nor in this particular are they altogether unreasonable. Had our hero been a character entirely regardless of right and wrong, or a reckless plunderer, his memory would never have been cherished as it has been. Human nature never respects a common pest; and yet it is no easy task to reconcile the common notions of mankind respecting sterling worth, with the charac-

ter of an avowed outlaw. The times in which he lived, the habits of the people, the peculiar manner in which his unlawful conduct exhibited itself, form the key to this apparent anomaly. Robin Hood was an outlaw, he violated the laws of society as they then existed; but there are eternal principles of justice beyond the reach of law which powerfully influence mankind: these our hero, guided apparently by a generous nature, held in no light esteem. He destroyed the deer that, at the period in which he lived, ran at large in Barnsdale and Sherwood Forest; but these, tradition told him—and the people generally believed—had, in the days of their Saxon ancestors, been common property, belonging to him whose well-spiced arrow could bring them down. He likewise, aided by a well-trained band of followers, plundered the wealthy, and especially wealthy churchmen; but here too he had much sympathy, which cannot be wondered at when it is considered how the greater part of the gentry of these times had come in possession of their estates, and how overgrown with opulence the church had become at the period when he flourished. Norman churchmen and Norman barons it is true had for two or three centuries been established in the country through the successful issue of the arms of the conqueror; yet still the traditional accounts of Saxon times, Saxon usages, and a Saxon aristocracy were dear to the English, and therefore any one able to out-manceuvre or defy the authority by which their privileges had been curtailed, could not be otherwise than at least silently approved.

That Robin was neither a person prompted to become a robber from avarice and idleness, nor one who seized all he could obtain regardless of the injuries he might occasion, tradition and all existing records clearly attest. On the contrary, he appears to have lived a merry life in the forests, and to have had quite as keen a relish for assisting the distressed, as he had for plundering the opulent.

Without laying too much stress on his conduct as an adventurer and generous brigand, there is something in his mode of living that recommends itself to the imagination. Hence it is that the deeds of Robin Hood are always read with avidity by the young; and there are few that have gazed upon a well-painted victualler's sign-board, exhibiting the green costume and archer-accoutrements of our hero standing under a fine large forest-tree, with a herd of deer just visible in the distance, that have not felt a kind of yearning for the realisation of something similar,—that have not found in the subject something congenial to impulses within them which they could feel but not perhaps fully understand. It is not my purpose to attempt to explain them. It may be that the subject contains in it the germs of much ideal poetry, stimulating the imagination, and therefore pleasing; or it may be that our nature still retains some latent reminiscences transmitted to us from an ancestry subsisting by the chase, towards which we are instinctively drawn as to a native element. This latter idea requires less apology when we consider how strong is the attachment to field-sports

in some people, causing our game-laws to be attended with so many atrocities. There are persons whose love of these sports is commensurate with their love of freedom: they will sacrifice one quite as cheerfully as the other; what is so strong must be constitutional, and what is frequently constitutional cannot be accounted otherwise than natural. These are however speculations which are merely matters of opinion, and be their claims what they may, it cannot be denied that the character here referred to has obtained general esteem, and has consequently in it something essentially good. How the knowledge of that character has been derived we purpose to consider in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE RECORDED EXPLOITS OF ROBIN HOOD.

EVERY one, at least every Yorkshireman, is familiar with the observation that Robin Hood could brave all weathers but a thaw-wind, and to say nothing of a stone in Kirklees Church-yard professing to be his tomb-stone, most people are aware that a famous well between Pontefract and Doncaster, part of ancient Barnsdale, is still known as Robin Hood's well and yet no record of his birth or death is believed to exist. Some with more scepticism than prudent judg-

ment have even called in question the fact of his existence; and others who, having carefully examined the evidences of his deeds and history, entertain no doubt whatever as to the facts themselves, are nevertheless at variance as to the precise period when they occurred. The great Scotch novelist in his incomparable *Ivanhoe*, makes him contemporary with King John and the lion-hearted Richard, and in this he is not singular; others again, but with what propriety we shall afterwards see, place the period of his life in the sixteenth century. The most valuable, and indeed the only real records of our hero are the ballads in which his deeds have been celebrated, and as some of these are known to have existed in the reign of Edward the Third, it clearly proves him to have lived not later than the fourteenth century. One of these ballads mentions "Edwarde our cumly Kynge," into whose service we learn from the same source, he volunteered for a short term, and as a person named Robyn Hode, is mentioned in the journal of the royal household in the year 1324, there is strong presumptive evidence that this referred to our hero. When therefore we join these facts together, that ballads celebrating his doings existed in the fourteenth century, that our hero lived for a time in the service of the King, and that a record of a person named Robyn Hode, engaged as one of Edward the Second's valets, is still in existence, we feel a point to be established, at which we may presume to fix the time when he flourished, namely the early part of the fourteenth century. To the natural enquiry are these

ballads entitled to credence, it may be answered that prior to the invention of printing, the usual means whereby uncommon events, or distinguished characters were chronicled in the public annals, were by means of ballads. The ballads celebrating the deeds of Robin Hood are by no means a literary curiosity. It might be safely asserted that every nation in Europe has had recourse to the practice. The greatest epic poem perhaps that the world has ever produced is understood to have been thus composed for the purposes of celebrating in song the prowess of a Grecian chieftain. I refer to the Iliad of Homer. These songs or ballads were intended for frequent rehearsal, and by this method were transmitted from father to son. The poem here mentioned, according to the best authority, existed one or two centuries before it was written down in a methodical manner, and it is well known that ballads still exist in other languages celebrating the exploits of persons who flourished long before the age of our hero. The Welsh and Erse languages we are told abound with such specimens, and so far from exploits thus transmitted being unworthy of credit, there are the strongest reasons for thinking that the truth has been respected, at all events that these heroic songs agreed with the rumours current, on which they were founded, at the time they were composed. We can hardly suppose that any poetical composition, descriptive for instance of the siege of Troy, or the daring exploits of Robin Hood, would receive much attention from a people who must have known the real facts of the case, unless it accorded

pretty nearly with the accounts of those facts then current. Such compositions would undoubtedly give a little embellishment to the stories; but history and biography never fail to do the same, and were we to assert that facts handed down merely through the medium of a country's ballads, save this little embellishment, are as much to be depended on as many now received as facts in history, we could bring forward many influential names in support of this assertion. Relying therefore on this position we shall in the following chapters give a detailed account of the most memorable exploits and doings for which he has been famed. Before entering upon these, however, it seems desirable further to remark that Sir Walter Scott in making Robin Hood, under the name of Locksley, contemporary with Richard and John, has adopted the more commonly received date as to the time of his existence; but as the ballads are admitted to be the only repositories of his fame, the most ancient are undoubtedly the best. There is a space of more than a century between the two periods, consequently Robin could not live in the time of Richard the First and during the reign of any of the Edwards, and as the ballad to which reference has been made is among the most ancient, wherein "Kynge Edward" is expressly named, there is a difficulty which those who fix the date at the time of Richard cannot have properly appreciated; besides the same ballad speaks of the King going to Lancashire, which county it is well known Edward the Second visited. How the vulgar error became established, it

is of course more easy to conjecture than to prove. It might be that the chivalric character of the lion-hearted monarch better suited a traditional interview with bold Robin in the green-wood than that of Edward the Second which was never popular. A copy of this ancient ballad is preserved in the public library at Cambridge, in black letter, the title runs thus:—"Here beginneth a mery geste of Robyn Hode and his meyne, and of the proude Sheryfe of Nottyngham," and the printer's finis thus:—"Explycit King Edward and Robyn Hode and lytell Johan. Emprinted at London, in Flete Strete, at the syne of the sone, by Wynken de Worde." The fact seems to be that many of the ballads in the garland are of much more recent date than the one above quoted, and while they depict events connected with his history, which had been handed down to their authors with some degree of truth, as to their general tenour, they are not to be depended upon with reference to dates or genealogical facts. Thus the more modern ballads in recording the visit of the King term him Richard, thus likewise he is termed Earl of Huntingdon a fact which no careful examiner believes, notwithstanding an equally modern inscription on his professed tomb-stone asserting the same thing.

CHAPTER III.

ROBIN HOOD, THE KNIGHT, AND THE ABBOT OF ST.
MARY'S OF YORK.

EDWARD the Second came to the throne in the year 1307, when it is believed Robin Hood would be about twenty years of age. The place of his birth is not known, but according to the opinion of Wright, Hunter, and other antiquaries, it must have been in the neighbourhood of Wakefield, at least they presume that this was most probable. He was undoubtedly of a good family, as may be inferred from the influence he exercised over his followers, and the carriage he maintained in the presence of persons of exalted rank. It is well known that the reign of the above monarch was one of disaffection and rebellion. The King was weak-minded and governed by favourites, whom he allowed to gain an ascendancy over him. This conduct roused a spirit of rebellion in which numbers joined and though the king was sufficiently powerful to suppress certain out-breaks, headed by the Duke of Lancaster, that took place in the early part of his reign, and even to put to death their leader, yet many of the disaffected continued at large, their own bravery, the natural indolence of the King, and more immediate quarrels in which he became engrossed, rendering them compara-

tively secure. Robin Hood was believed originally of this number, and as the peculiar state of the times made Cromwell a great general, so the situation in which circumstances had cast Robin, made him at once the King of Outlaws, and the most celebrated archer in the kingdom. Indeed his character was not developed till he entered the green-wood for concealment. There he found an element in the sports and society to which he became introduced, for which he was eminently fitted. The game in the forests, now no longer common property, afforded delightful amusement and employment to one who gloried in his profession as an archer, and rendered him, through constant practice, an opponent that few in those days would wish to encounter. He and his men however could not subsist and live that jovial life in the forest to which they aspired on the mere spoils of wild animals. The great road from London to the North passed through Barnsdale, or as it is styled in the ancient ballads Barnysdale, and Sherwood Forest. This presented them with other game and richer booties than those they secured with the bow. Pecuniary transactions in those days were not negociated by means of drafts and bills, but with hard specie, an article always in season to our hardy foresters. They liked good cheer and expensive clothing and obtained the means of procuring them often but too readily, as the following particulars, the subject of ancient ballads, sufficiently attest.

Robin Hood surrounded by a few of his picked men, was one day in the forest of Barnsdale, when a question

as to their dinner, an important item in the journal of a forester, began to be talked of. Leaning against a tree by the side of Little John, his second self, Robin intimated that he should not dine till some exploit should be performed that would bear the expenses.

Ever ready for an enterprise, his companions begged to know his will, which was, that they should proceed in a given direction and there look out for a baron, knight or squire, that might be in a condition to do them a service. At the same time he reminded them of a rule by which most of their depredations were guided, and on their observance of which much of their fame depends, that they should not attack any husbandman or good yeoman, neither should they injure any knight or squire that showed himself of a courteous temperament, that is, any that displayed some amount of fellow-feeling, as likely to prove a boon companion in a little jolly pastime. A feature still more striking in this mode of life is likewise mentioned, when the order of the day was given, namely, that they should attack no party whatever in which was a woman. The reason assigned for this is that our hero, although a robber of wealthy churchmen, was of a religious and devotional character; that, for instance, he heard three masses every morning, before he proceeded to business, one of which was the mass of our Lady which he is said to have liked better than any other, and on that account from respect to her sex he grounded this chivalric rule. Whatever the motive might be, these being the days of chivalry and knight-errantry, the rule was calculated

to secure popularity. The commands then being thus delivered, Little John, Much the Miller's Son, and Will Scathelocke, modernized into Scarlet, taking their trusty bows in their hands, proceeded as directed up to the Sayles, and so to Watling Street, Robin himself stopping behind to provide the dinner. Whilst the party were thus on the look out over Barnsdale, on a retired road they perceived a gentleman on horse-back, who proved to be a knight of gentle birth. It does not appear that their mode of attack was of a rude physical force character. Undoubtedly the gentleman would see by their dress and equipments into what company he had fallen, and from the fame of their unerring bows, would be aware how matters would turn, if he opposed their wishes. All this we gather as to the civilities that passed between them at their meeting amounts to their inviting him to dine with their master under the green-wood tree. The gentleman certainly tried to excuse on the ground of prior engagement, by saying he had purposed to dine at Blyth or Doncaster; but under the present circumstances, all things considered, he would go along with them to their chief, and partake of his hospitality, Robin appears to have been a good cook as well as a great archer, for on the arrival of his companions and their guest, the bill of fare as presented in the "uncouth rhymes," contained the following items, namely, bread and wine, numbles of the deer, swan, pheasants, water-fowl, and various other small birds, to which they did ample justice; and having finished their banquet or repast, the knight consid-

ered he might then be spared, as he wished to proceed.

“Certainly, certainly,” said Robin, “only you understand of course that it is not usual for a squire to pay for the dinner of a knight, you will first have the goodness to pay for your dinner.”

“I would do so willingly,” replied the knight, “only I have not the means, I am really poor!”—as in fact his garb to which he referred appeared to testify.

“How much money have you in that wallet?”

“Only ten shillings!” answered the knight.

“If that be true,” said Robin, “I will certainly not diminish it, but mark me, if you are deceiving me, you will be a loser.”

To settle the question, Little John was commissioned to examine his pouches, which he did minutely, and found the knight's account to be true.

“How has this happened?” sympathisingly then enquired our hero, “since you are evidently a person of gentle birth!”

Whereat the knight proceeded to tell him that his family had enjoyed the title or rank of knight, for a hundred years, and that he himself had known the time when he could spend £400 a year; but that in consequence of litigation, in defence of his eldest son, who had slain a knight and esquire of Lancashire, he had been reduced to imminent ruin; that he had mortgaged his lands to the abbot of St. Mary's of York, that the sum ought to be repaid the next day, or in case of failure his lands be forfeited to the abbot,—that he was without the means of discharging the debt—and

that he was then on his way to Palestine to join the Crusades, in order to avoid the degradation and misery to which he was on the point of being reduced.

After telling this painful but honest story the knight shortly found himself in good hands, as the generous-hearted Robin forthwith ordered four hundred pounds together with a new suit of clothes and another horse to be at the service of this unfortunate traveller.

Little John who on all occasions appears to have been as willing as his master to do a generous action, cheerfully handed over the money, and even volunteered his services to accompany the knight in the capacity of groom or servant on his journey to St. Mary's Abbey, to which place the relieved and light-hearted knight knew it was time to haste.

The following day the abbot of St. Mary's surrounded by a conclave of monks congratulated them on the return of the day when the said knight ought to repay the money.

There was high glee among the company as they seem to have known but too well of the poverty-stricken condition of the borrower, and expressed themselves positively certain that the funds would not be forthcoming, and consequently that the lands belonging to the knight would legally fall to the abbey,—a pretty nice addition to the revenues of a religious house, £400 per annum, and pretty good interest too for the loan of their money.

The high cellarer got quite merry at the idea of such a speedy and ample God-send. All present in fact

except the prior (let humanity ever be remembered,) exhibited unqualified satisfaction, while this individual mingled pity for the sufferer with his pleasure for the prosperity of the abbey.

Mid-day arrived and passed and still no visitor reached the abbey to bring payment of the debt. At last as the day was rapidly declining, the feelings of the fraternity were somewhat startled at the announcement that the knight was at the gate.

For the sake of ascertaining the intentions of the Abbot towards him, or more probably at the suggestion of his humoursome companion, the knight feigned that he was unable to pay, and sued for favour and time; but was most sternly resisted on this point by the abbot, the sheriff, and the justice. Pay he must, or the forfeiture must be complete. Seeing then how matters stood, to the no small mortification of the fraternity he paid the money and went home with a light heart singing merrily. His wife, or rather we should say his lady, having heard of his unexpected good fortune, met him at Utersdale on his way home. After this the knight lived at home very prudently, and laid up money from the proceeds of his estate, now his own, intending by the end of the year to repay his opportune friend with interest.

Accordingly at the end of the year, taking with him an hundred bows, and one hundred sheaves of arrows each an ell in length, having burnished heads, notched with silver and fledged with beautiful feathers, he set out towards Barnsdale to meet the outlaw, his benefactor under the green-wood shade.

Now it so happened, a thing not unusual, that on the very day Robin's three special companions, Little John, Scathelock and Much, were on the look out in Watling Street for some little occasional duty belonging to their profession, when they saw two black monks, each on a palfrey, attended by a guard of fifty-two men in charge of seven sumpter horses, or beasts of burden laden with treasure. This was something to the point but the accompanying force was tremendous against so small a party. Little John however could not think for a moment that the booty should be allowed to pass unchallenged. He therefore put a good face on it, and boldly told the monks they were Robin Hood's men. Whether it was that the guards were not very hearty in the service of the monks, or that the dread of entering the lists against a company whose arrows were so famous and with aid possibly within call, it does not appear. It is however plainly told us, that no sooner had the guards learnt the character of their three assailants than they all fled, leaving the sumpter horses and the treasures with only the monks, a little page, and a groom to take charge of them. Little John and his companions however undertook to manage them and conducted them into the depths of the forest on a visit to their master.

As soon as Robin beheld these new visitors in the charge of his trusty men, he felt sure St. Mary was about to pay the money he had parted with a twelve-month before for the benefit of her coffers. It was now discovered that one of the monks was the high cellarer,

whose rigid adherence to the interests of the abbey had made him unkind towards the knight. To give his visitors a seasonable greeting, Robin blew his horn and seven score yeomen immediately appeared. Robin feigned to be an ill-used man, and complained that the abbey had done nothing for him for a long time, and yet it owed him £400, the sum borrowed by the Knight. He then questioned the monks as to the amount of money they had with them. The cellarer guessing what was likely to happen acknowledged they had twenty marks. Robin adhering to his rule of not distressing the needy told him that if it was really true that they were so poor, he would even give them pecuniary aid, but if he found that they were trying to cheat him, he would take all they had. The treasure bags were examined, when instead of twenty marks they found £800. Robin further ascertained that the monks were on their way to London, not merely to convey thither this money, but to learn if nothing could be done to the knight by legal proceedings, to enable them still to obtain the estate that had so narrowly escaped them a year before. The monks were then stripped of all their wealth; but treated nevertheless with a good dinner, for which, considering as they departed they could have dined much cheaper elsewhere they did not express any thanks.

This day's adventures were not yet ended. Soon after the monks had taken their leave of Robin and his men, the knight appeared with his attendants and presents to repay the £400 and twenty marks more

for courtesy. Robin was not to be out-done in generosity, he indeed accepted the presents, consisting of bows and arrows, but instead of receiving the £400 which he had lent, he gave to the knight £400 more of the money he had just taken from the monks.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE JOHN AND THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM.

ONNECTED with the ballad which forms the subject of the last chapter, is the following story of an exploit of Little John, and as it likewise tends to illustrate the mode of life that the merry company of the green-wood lived, we here insert it.

The sheriff of Nottingham, it would appear, had announced his intentions on a certain day to have a great shooting match, at which all men expert in the use of the bow were invited to attend.

Sport of this kind was seldom unseasonable to the inclinations of our noted out-laws. How many of them attended, or how many of them entered the lists, we have not the means of knowing. Little John however was there, and proved the successful competitor, cleaving the wand with his winged arrows every shot, and so highly did his archery recommend him to the favour of the sheriff, that he asked him to live with him, not as a menial, but as a sort of companion and assistant in his establishment.

Little John, under the assumed name of Green-leaf, consented, and remained with him some time ; but finding things not adapted to his taste, or the situation too confining, he soon felt eager to be back again beneath the green-wood tree. Besides the sheriff was not a coin of the right stamp, and he took occasion one day in his absence to ask for his dinner before the usual hour when his master would be at home, with whom, as was his wont, he would be expected to dine.

The butler fastened the buttery door to keep the hungry man outside. Little John was not however to be put off, but gave the butler a blow, which as our authority intimates, should he live a hundred winters he would not forget. He then burst open the door, and dispensing with ceremony, helped himself. The cook however made his appearance as an objector to this hungry mode of proceeding. He appears to have been a more formidable antagonist than the butler, as he and Little John drew their swords, and fought for an hour, without any successful lunge being given on either side. Both were convinced that his antagonist was a good swordsman, a fellow-feeling immediately sprang up, and Little John invited him to accompany him to his master Robin Hood. The proposal was accepted. They drank wine and feasted together, and in concert ransacked the sheriff's house, and took away all his plate with three hundred and three pounds in money.

When Little John and his companion the cook, had carried their booty to the company of outlaws, from whom they experienced a hearty reception, the former

took his departure in search of the sheriff his master, whom he knew to be out at no great distance in quest of deer. The sheriff was surprised to find one of his family in that situation, but as Green-leaf told him that he knew where to find a fine hart of a green colour with seven score deer, the sheriff rejoiced at tidings so agreeable, and therefore, without obtaining any satisfactory explanation respecting his man being in that locality, agreed to accompany him at once to the surprising herd. They had not travelled together a very great distance before they found themselves in the midst of the jovial out-laws, Robin Hood and his seven score bow-men, when Green-leaf told the sheriff that Robin was the hart, and his company the deer of which he had spoken. The Sheriff saw he was taken in, but there was no redress. Robin treated him with his usual courtesy, they dined and drank together, having for dinner-service, the sheriff's own plate. After dinner the sheriff wished to withdraw. Good company however, he was reminded, required further courtesy. He passed a night sleeping like the rest on the ground, a bed by no means adapted to his ideas of comfort. He petitioned on the morrow to be allowed to depart, and he would forgive all the injuries he had sustained. Robin at last consented provided the sheriff would take a solemn oath, that he would not be the means of doing them any harm ; but if it ever should be in his power, he would render them assistance.

The sheriff was but too happy to comply with the request, he took the oath and hastened home, certainly

somewhat disappointed with the tall hart and herd of deer he had, under the guidance of his wily servant, gone to inspect the previous day.

CHAPTER V.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BISHOP.

T was on a beautiful day, the sun had nearly reached his prime, as the ballads inform us, that Robin Hood was traversing the merry wild woods with an eye to pastime and pleasure. He was however alone, and at some distance from his companions, when chance or misfortune showed him to be all but within the clutches of a bishop, attended with his followers. Such company under such circumstances was by no means to Robin's taste. He knew that if the bishop got fairly hold of him, he could expect no favour; and the idea of a halter round his neck, suggests nothing very comfortable, even to the bravest of men. The sound of his bugle was sufficient in many emergencies; but this could only avail him when his followers were within hearing. He spied a cottage at a short distance and as he knew its occupant to be a woman whom he had previously assisted he hastened thither, and told her how he was situated and pursued by the bishop.

“Change dresses with me,” said the woman, “and in these clothes you may leave the house in safety!”

This was immediately done. Robin doffed his suit of green, and attired himself in the grey linsey-woolsey of his hostess. The woman with similar haste, clad herself in the out-law's garments, somewhat too capacious no doubt for the delicate wearer, and in this garb secreted herself in the cottage, waiting the arrival of the exploring party.

Robin under this peaceable, unsuspected costume, rambled away without attracting any notice from the hostile company, and with all haste went in pursuit of his companions. Here however he ran a risk of being rudely handled. Little John spied him at a distance but not recognizing his master in so unusual a dress, and perceiving in his features and gait little of feminine grace, he either suspected an enemy in disguise, or as the ballad suggests, thought the intruder "an old witch," and in either case not an improper object at which to discharge an arrow. Robin however seeing him prepare to shoot, gave him a signal that at once put all right, and Robin joined and headed his party, now the aggressor, to surprise the bishop.

We must here return to the cottage. The bishop's party had seen Robin enter it, and as nobody but an old woman had left it, they felt pretty sure he had concealed himself within. They were not however very willing to surround it, such a proceeding involved the danger of a messenger from some of its windows or loop-holes, in the shape of an arrow. By cautious degrees however this was done. The door was opened, and after some little timid

searching they seized the occupier arrayed in the well-known livery of green.

“We have caught him at last!” said the bishop, “bring him out and put him on this milk-white steed,” said he, “and I will ride by his side on my dapple-grey!”

In this manner the captive being disarmed they proceeded across the forest, the bishop, as the ballad declares, laughing all the way at the success of his recent enterprise.

They had not travelled a great distance before a large company of bow-men showed themselves in the distance. The bishop, somewhat disconcerted, yet not knowing but they might be a friendly party, enquired of his captive who they might be.

“Marry,” quoth the captive, “I take it to be a man they call Robin Hood!”

“Robin Hood!” said the bishop, “then who art thou, I pray!”

“Oh!” said the now finding herself secure, “I’m only a woman!” at the same time intimating, in not very delicate terms, that if he doubted the truth of what she said, the proof might be readily come at.

“Then woe is me!” said the bishop, perceiving himself already in the power of the advancing bowmen. The story is now a short one. Robin at the head of his men, bade the bishop dismount, and tied his horse to a tree. He then took the mantle from the bishop’s back, and out of his portmanteau speedily counted five hundred pounds.

“You may go your way home, now,” said Robin.

“Not so fast, not so fast,” exclaimed Little John, “remember this is a bishop, he shall sing us a mass before he departs, such a privilege is not ours every day.”

Willing to oblige his friend, Robin took hold of the bishop and tied him to a tree, and then bade him sing a mass to him and his yeomanry.

The bishop went through the duty to the satisfaction of his detainers ; they then put him on his horse again, with all due gravity, only, they placed his face towards the tail of the horse, and gave it into his hand, so that he had to ride with his back to the horse’s head. They then bade him depart, charging him carefully not to forget to pray for Robin Hood.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE TWO PRIESTS, OR ROBIN HOOD’S GOLDEN PRIZE.

FROM the foregoing exploits, it will have been seen that our hero’s mode of getting money gives him a right to the title of an out-law, as he is generally very properly styled. It will nevertheless have appeared that in his method of plunder principles were respected, which a common highwayman or brigand rarely understands. The story in which we are now engaged is

one that exhibits this peculiarity in colours more than usually striking. He was certainly a wag in his day, and unless he had been very busy indeed, he would any day have gone half a mile out of his way to lend his hand to a hearty country lark, especially if the object on which it was to be played wore a hood.

Many of his unlawful actions were directed against persons in sacred offices, a fact which pretty clearly proves that churchmen, strictly so called, were at that time reputedly rich, and had not a very strong hold on the affections of the people ; otherwise Robin's robber-like pranks would have been with them an unpardonable offence, whereas they appear to have been just the contrary.

We have here Robin disguised as a friar, carrying hood, gown, beads and crucifix, and at large, that is to say, beyond his special province the green-wood, in search of employment in his peculiar profession.

A begging friar might, it would seem, turn out even to persons of a kindred character a somewhat exceptionable person to meet, but we will adhere to the ballad. Accoutred or clad as we have described, our authority declares that Robin had not gone more than two or three miles, when he saw two lusty priests clad in black, come riding gallantly along. Robin appeals to their pity for the sake of the virgin, and humbly begs of them to give him a groat, assuring them that although he had been travelling all day, he had not so much as tasted a cup of drink or a morsel of bread.

The priests declared their inability to give him any help whatever, not having a penny in their possession.

and alleging as a reason the fact of their having been robbed, without being able to save a penny. The story plausible as it appears did not satisfy the sturdy mendicant. From petitioning he immediately began to charge them with uttering statements that were not true, at which the priests hurried off, thinking perhaps that his assumed garb did not sit easily on him, and might not prove a hindrance to a misfortune such as they confessed had already befallen them. Robin however by swiftness of foot was not long before he laid hold of them both, and rather rudely pulled them off their horses. The priests begged piteously for mercy, and indeed received it, as the pseudo-friar treated them with consideration and used no further violence.

“You said,” gravely replied Robin, “that you are without money. Well, so am I! Let us therefore kneel down and beseech heaven to send some.” Down therefore on their knees they went, and prayed loudly for money in their need. So fervent indeed were the priests, for Robin does not seem to have prayed much, that they wept and wrung their hands, calling loudly for the said boon, at all times precious, and now so much needed.

After Robin had kept them thus praying for an hour, he said, “now arise, let us see how much heaven has sent us.” The priests got up and felt in their pockets, but no money could be found.

“No no!” said Robin, “that is not the way, we will search each other,” and proceeded forthwith to search them. However much the priests deserved to be com-

mended for their praying, Robin was by far the best hand at finding where the money had come to, for he soon found five hundred pieces of gold, which he laid on the grass to the great consternation of the other two. Our authority says they "sighed wondrous deep," but could not say a word.

"Well, cheer up," said Robin, "you shall have a share ! you prayed heartily for the gold, and now it has been sent, you shall enjoy it." They sighed again.

"Now," said he, "you shall have fifty pounds a piece for your share, the rest shall be mine, because, remember it was I that proposed the plan by which we have obtained this money." The monks thinking this sad business ended began to move off. He however insisted on their taking three oaths ere they departed, to which there was no alternative, but their instantly complying. The first was that they should never tell lies again, pass what way they might. The second was that they would never again tempt maids to sin, nor lie with other men's wives. The third that they would for ever afterwards be charitable to the poor, and say they had once met with a holy friar. This done he set them on their horses again, and away they rode, while he returned with pride and glee to join his friends in the shady forest.

CHAPTER VII.

LITTLE JOHN AND THE FOUR BEGGARS.

THE last worst shift of all, according to the Ayrshire Bard, is to go a-begging. The merry company of the green-wood seem nevertheless to have had a way of their own, of doing things so as to acquire celebrity, where little was to be looked for. In the ballad of Little John and the four beggars, we are introduced to Robin Hood and all his company walking under the shade of the forest trees, when their leader declared that some of them must go a-begging. Whether in those days, as in the present, mendicancy was no proof of want, we are not told. The command was given without any assigned reason, and Little John was the person whom his master specially appointed to carry out this declaration. This Little John was a most willing worker. No sooner was the commission given him, than with right good-will he prepared for his journey. Taking a Palmer's weed, a staff and a coat, and a few bags, one for bread, one for cheese, and one for pence, or rather a penny as the rhyme gives it, he made his way to the haunts of lawful men.

We are not told what charitable donations he met with, or how he succeeded as a drawler of a long story about seeking work for a fortnight, and hoping he might

never find any. It is nevertheless asserted that of all the beggars he met that day he was the chief. Among others he came in contact with a company of four, one of them deaf, one of them blind, and one lame. They entered into conversation as was natural ; but we do not recognise, in their intercourse, the truth of the common maxim, "a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind." On the contrary one of them began to speak disparagingly of their new acquaintance, saying that they had brethren in London, Berwick, Coventry, Dover, and in short in all parts of the world, but among them all not one such crooked a carl as he, at the same time giving Little John a crack on his crown, a present by no means adapted to the receiver's taste.

"Indeed!" said Little John "is that your mode of doing business, you quite surprise me ; well, one is never too old to learn. Stand out, one at a time, and I'll give you all a turn." They did so, each finding his turn come faster than he cared for, Little John saw the game would be over at once, if the conditions were not altered. "All together," said he, "you will do better that way ;" but even all together they found hard knocks come much too freely. They fought in fact, till their new acquaintance had it all his own way : and a surprising way it was, as he made the dumb man roar, the blind man see, and the cripple of seven years standing run faster than himself. To make an end of the quarrel he hemmed them in against a wall and made them exhibit their wares. Begging could not have been a bad trade in those days, as they surrendered to the hero

of the fight the sum of three hundred pounds and three.

“I’ll give over begging,” said Little John, “my fortune has been so good, and if I drink water while this lasts I shall not die happy. Good morning gentlemen, I shall be wanted at home,” said Little John, at the same time steering his course to the merry Sherwood where he was well received by Robin and his yeomanry, and where, after he had given the particulars of his begging expedition, they danced and sung around an aged oak, but longest and loudest was the song of Little John, that if they drank water with three hundred and three pounds in their pockets they could not die happy. And then with three cheers for the merry green-wood they retired to rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD.

THIS is not the only prank which our hero is said to have practised on a bishop, as a previous chapter sufficiently explains; but whether the bishop of Hereford abovenamed be the same individual, or another person in the same or a similar office, our authority does not satisfactorily determine. The exploits are clearly not identical. Our story commences with Robin Hood’s knowing that the bishop of Hereford

with all his company was about to pass through a part of Barnsdale. It has already been shown, that priests and bishops were entitled in the opinion of our out-law to no special favours, and agreeably to this practise, Robin made preparations for way-laying the above traveller as he passed through the forest.

He ordered some of his men, along with himself, to be arrayed as shepherds, and having killed a fat deer, they proceeded to dress and cook it at a fire by the road-side along which they expected the bishop would pass. Other men, it would seem, were posted in other directions, within call, to take care that the bishop did not escape by going some other way. His information however as to the route proved correct. The bishop came, as he passed along, to the place where Robin with six of his men arrayed as shepherds were cooking, that is roasting, venison.

“How is this,” said the bishop, turning to the shepherds, “how is this, that you have been killing the King’s deer. You shall go with me. You shall see the King,” at the same time ordering his men to lay hold of them and secure them. With a view of trying the clemency of the bishop, Robin pleaded earnestly for compassion, reminding him that it became not his position and office, to be the means of taking away so many lives. It was however of no avail. He was answered in unrelenting terms and told he should go to the King. Finding therefore that he had to do with a party that was deaf to pity, Robin took his bugle from his pouch, and applying the small end to his mouth,

blew a long loud blast, when three score and ten of his brave archers presented themselves, at the service of their master. The tables were now turned, and the bishop began to supplicate, saying, that if he had known he should meet with Robin Hood and his men, he would have gone another way.

Robin gave him credit for this part of his story ; but persisted in having him to sup with him that evening, in merry Barnsdale. Accordingly he took him by the hand and led him to head-quarters in the wood. Robin was no churl in making a feast. He furnished his guest on this occasion with comforts suited to his dignity, making him drink ale, beer, and wine. The bishop was not ignorant as to the manner the feast would end ; in fact after they had all enjoyed themselves freely at the table, he called for his bill, intimating that he expected by this time it would be no trifle.

Little John, like an experienced secretary, attended to this particular, and taking the cloak from the bishop he laid it on the ground, where from the lining of the same he presently exhibited three hundred pounds : a sight which, as the ballad assures us, delighted the eyes of Little John, whilst he was taking the same into his custody. The reckoning for the supper being thus settled, Robin Hood caused music to be played, took the bishop by the hand, and made him dance in his boots, which he did without complaining, when he learnt that no further penance was required. This done, he was set at liberty and was soon on his way to London, resolving never again to act as keeper over the deer in the forest.

CHAPTER IX.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BUTCHER.

THE song of Robin Hood and the butcher like many besides, introduces us to our hero, with “a hey down, down an a down,” sauntering by a road-side in the forest, where he saw a butcher pass along with a fine grey mare in a cart loaded with butcher’s meat apparently intended for the market.

Robin accosted him as a fellow-traveller, and wished to enter into conversation with him respecting his occupation.

The butcher seemed disposed to give no explanation as to his residence ; but told him he was going to Nottingham to sell his meat. “Perhaps,” said Robin, “you would have no objection to sell all together, horse, cart and all its contents.” “Not in the least,” replied the butcher, “provided you give me their worth.”

“What is the price you put upon them ?” continued Robin, “speak in reason and I am a purchaser.”

“You shall have all,” said the butcher, “for four marks.”

“I ’ll give it,” said Robin, at the same time pulling out his purse, and counting over the above sum, which he handed over to the seller. This business ended, the butcher gave up immediate possession, and Robin got into the cart, and drove on to Nottingham, in the

capacity of an honest tradesman. There were other butchers at Nottingham, besides our adventurer, and as Robin was a new comer he attracted considerable attention. His dress and manners were above his assumed calling, which alone convinced the dealers he was not a regular brother in the trade ; but when he began to sell his meat their surprise was unbounded, for he sold three pounds of meat and sometimes five pounds, for as little money as they charged for one pound. It was no wonder therefore that Robin got all the custom. It does not appear however that the other butchers were ill-natured with him on this account ; on the contrary they held a consultation, at which they concluded he was some prodigal possessor of great riches, and heir to some large landed estates. They therefore considered that the best thing they could do would be to get into his good graces by inviting him to a convivial entertainment. A most excellent method, this, of getting over an unpleasant event. Nottingham was not at this time so large a town, that a novelty of this sort could pass without attracting general notice. The sheriff became acquainted with what had happened, and as he too concurred in the opinion of his being a rich prodigal, he contrived to make one of the party. The entertainment passed off most pleasantly ; and all present felt convinced that Robin was a gentleman bent on wasting his property, as he not only had parted with his meat at a price positively ruinous ; but during the feast he surpassed all present, by his love of good cheer, and by his willingness to pay for it.

The sheriff contrived before he departed, to enquire if he had any horned beasts to dispose of. To which Robin unhesitatingly answered that he had two or three hundreds as well as a good many broad acres of land.

“I should like to see your deer,” said the sheriff, expecting of course to be able to make a good bargain with so lavish a green-horn as our adventurer appeared.

“To be sure,” said Robin, with perfect frankness of manner, “if you will accompany me to my residence you shall see my cattle, and if you like them we shall no doubt come to terms.

Eager to effect his purpose, before any other purchaser should forestall him, the sheriff immediately prepared to accompany the prodigal; not forgetting to take with him a large sum of money to secure his purchases.

Robin and he rode on together very agreeably, till they came into the midst of the forest, the merry Sherwood, when the sheriff began to express his fears, lest they should fall into the hands of a person that was called Robin Hood.

At length they came in sight of a large herd of red deer, which Robin pointed out to the sheriff and asked him how he liked his horned cattle as these were the animals he had named to him at Nottingham.

The sheriff's fears now got the better of him, and he mournfully said he wished he was at home—as he liked not the turn affairs were seemingly about to take. Robin at this blew three blasts on his bugle, in answer to which Little John speedily appeared attended by

several of his followers. The sheriff looked panic-stricken.

“What do you want, master?” said Little John, eyeing the sheriff with intense satisfaction.

“Only,” remarked Robin, “as I have brought a gentleman to dine with us to day, I wish you to make him comfortable.”

“We will do that readily,” said Little John, “as I am sure he is able to pay for a good dinner.”

Our authority does not give the particulars of the dinner party, but hastens to explain the fact, that Robin, ere he suffered his guest to depart, took the liberty of examining his baggage, from which he abstracted the sum of three hundred pounds. He then civilly led the sheriff to the out-skirts of the forest, that he might have no difficulty in finding his way.

Having then assisted him to mount his dapple grey, he bid him good bye, and expressed a wish that the sheriff would recommend him heartily to his wife at home. Thus Robin went laughing away.

CHAPTER X.

ROBIN HOOD AND LITTLE JOHN.

N the greater part of the previous chapters, it will have been seen by what means this renowned out-law obtained money, or as the phrase renders it in Yorkshire, raised the wind. In the ballad before us and several others, we are made to understand how recruits were enlisted, and through what ordeal they had to pass before they became entitled to membership in the merry company of the green-wood. Generosity was perhaps the most striking feature in the character of our hero. One possessed of any but a really noble nature, would have liked to be at the head of a company over whom individually he was physically superior. Robin Hood on the contrary, chose rather to admit those only to the privileges of brotherhood, who had proved themselves in single combat, somewhat his superior, except, perhaps, in the use of the bow, a qualification in which it does not appear, he had any rival. "I would rather,, once said a noble-minded monarch, "be king over a rich people, than be a rich king." The conduct of our hero, in this particular, exhibits a practice founded on a similar sentiment.

This feature in the conduct of Robin, cannot, we think, be better brought before the reader's notice, than by giving a detailed account of the first interview he had with Little John. Whoever is in the least acquainted with the history of Robin himself, must have likewise some acquaintance with Little John. The latter name is in fact through usage necessarily connected with the former. If the two persons, when alive, formed with each other a relationship as inseparable as their names have since done in tradition and song, their union was perfect. How this acquaintance was formed is the burden of the song from which this rencounter is taken.

When Robin Hood was about twenty years of age, he summoned one day the men who acknowledged him for their captain, and told them that fourteen long days had passed without any thing being done worth mentioning, that it was his intention to leave the grove for a short time for the sake of a change, and in hopes of meeting something more to his mind, that he would take his horn with him, and if any thing occurred that caused him to need their assistance he would blow it, a signification to which he knew they would eagerly respond. With this injunction he bid good morning to his companions, and immediately disappeared. He had not travelled far by the side of a brook, before he spied a stranger, and as bad luck would have it, they met on the middle of a long narrow bridge that would not allow two persons to pass. Neither of the parties thus meeting would give way, but stood looking at each other like a lion and a tiger till their eyes sparkled with rage.

“ You shall have Nottingham play,” at length said Robin, “ if you do not give back and allow me to pass,” as he took from his quiver a long goose-feathered arrow.

“ If thou attemptest to apply that to the string, young man,” said the stranger, “ I’ll make thy skin and thee part company.”

“ Fool,” said Robin, “ how vainly thou boastest. Knowest thou not, that were I disposed to use my bow, an arrow would be driven through thy heart before thou couldst move an ell.”

“ Thou talkest like a prating coward, as thou art, I’ll warrant thee,” replied the stranger. “ There thou standest armed with a bow and arrows, while I have only this good staff, otherwise thy vaunting should be immediately properly chastised.”

“ Coward, dost thou call me,” said Robin, “ wait a moment then, while I get prepared, and I will meet thee, and test thy manliness with thine own weapons.” So saying he laid down his bow and arrows, and hurried into a thicket where he shortly cut a root-grown oak staff, lusty and tough. He then returned to the stranger, who had been standing leisurely on the bridge, watching the movements of his opponent. They stood again gazing at each other for a moment: both were in the vigour of youth, and both fearless of danger, or indeed any thing else but disgrace.

The stranger, to Robin’s honour be it spoken, was much the taller of the two, being seven feet high; on the other hand Robin possessed muscles like iron, and an indomitable will, that quite disregarded the towering

dimensions of his gigantic foe. Robin dictated the terms on which they were to fight, namely, on the bridge till one of them fell into the water, and whichever this happened to be, the one that remained at his post on the bridge should be the victor.

The terms were accepted, and their cudgels speedily began to whistle round each others ears. Robin was the more expert and managed to deliver a message with his oaken cudgel on the head of his tall combatant before the latter.

The stranger was however a blade of the right temper. He pretended not to have heard the blow, but kept his weapon in constant motion, so that Robin's arm began to slacken with nothing but his efforts to parry off the blows that would otherwise have told a disastrous tale on his weatherbeaten visage. The stranger's temper meanwhile kept waxing hotter and hotter, and his superior height gave him an advantage, which nothing but the most expert science and untiring muscles could have for a moment withstood. Thus they fought on the bridge, till they actually reeked with sweat and foam mingled with blood, which the stranger no sooner perceived, than he felt himself endowed with the strength of a lion, exclaiming as he raised his huge staff into the air, "it is the purpose of my life never to die in debt," at the same time whirling down his weapon with the speed of lightning, he pitched a blow on the crown of his fellow, that had it not been for Robin's intervening staff, would have sent him into the stream a mass of mangled flesh. As it was Robin fell from the

bridge in a state of dubious consciousness, and was carried away by the current to an angle in the brook, on the bank side of which he recovered his breath and recollection.

“Thou art indeed a warrior,” said Robin at length, “this battle is here ended. I own I am fairly beaten. Thy sturdy arm would have no denial.” Pulling himself then out of the stream by the help of a thorn, Robin put his lips to his bugle, and blew a long but mournful blast, at which in a few moments a long row of stout bowmen, all clad in green, came running to their master. Will Stuteley was at the head of them, and as he approached, exclaimed,

“What is the matter, master; what is the matter? you are wet to the skin. How is it? tell us I pray!”

Looking at the stranger, the master replied, “see you there that lad, he has tumbled me in.” This was scarcely uttered before they all pushed towards the stranger, determined to give him a precious good ducking. “It may not be,” said Robin, “he is a stout true-hearted fellow, no one shall hurt him.”

The stranger looked surprised, and saw at once how matters stood. Robin now approached and offered a fellowship in the company, with a share in all the splendours of their dress and accoutrements. He likewise descanted in the most lively terms on the attractions of a life freely spent in the vocal groves. The soul of the stranger was touched with this appeal. He felt a kindred impulse, and from that hour pledged his fealty to the captain of the company, with whom he had

just been contending in fierce single-handed combat. Cheers were the response given by the company, after which Robin interrogated the stranger, as to his name which he told him was John Little.

“His name shall be changed,” said Will Stuteley. “John Little is not the thing at all, his name shall be changed, and I will be his God-father. He shall be called Little John instead; it is quite becoming, and when we look at him we shall understand it.”

This alteration was loudly approved, and Robin, although aching from the effects of the blows he had just received, exclaimed, “if so be that ye determine that there is to be a christening in the family, we must have a feast.” A suggestion that was likewise loudly hailed. A brace of fat does, with plenty of humming strong liquor, was presently in readiness for the christening.

Will Stuteley and seven other bold yeomen stood in a ring, and after performing some mock ceremony of christening this babe of seven feet high, they all raised a shout, making the elements ring with the name of Little John, and none ever entered the merry family of the green-wood with impulses and character better adapted to their mode of living, or with a zeal and affection more devoted to the interests and safety of their master.

When the ceremony was over Robin arrayed the new comer in a costly suit of green, and presented him with a curious long bow, telling him that he should be an archer as good as the best, and want neither silver nor gold so long as bishops retained such wares in their possession.

Music and feasting were then the order of the day and loud and merry was the company. We are told however that they retired to their caves in the forest with the setting sun, a fact which forms a contrast to the habits of modern revellers by no means favourable to the latter.

CHAPTER XI.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE TANNER.

THE name of the Tanner, which forms the subject of the ballad whence we derive our materials, was Arthur-a-Bland. We learn he was of Nottinghamshire, from the statement that never a squire in Nottinghamshire dare bid bold Arthur to stand.

This brave and stout Tanner it seems then, once took it into his head to take a ramble in the forest armed only with a long pike-staff. His great strength and usual success had made him daring, and thus as he was rambling through the forest looking at the red deer he spied Robin Hood a person whose appearance few cared to invite.

Arthur-a-Bland however no sooner saw him than he determined to have some fun. With this intention therefore he approached the out-law, and accosted him

roughly, telling him that he looked like a thief after the King's deer, that he was a keeper in the forest, and in the discharge of his duty must stop him.

“Indeed,” said Robin, “but as there are two words to a bargain, an enquiry must first be made as to thy ability to stop me.”

“I presume” said Robin, “unless thou hast some assistants at hand, thou wilt find me a troublesome booty. Tell me, I pray thee, hast thou any companions at hand from whom thou expectest help.”

“None whatever,” said the Tanner, “except this good oak staff, but this, I assure thee friend, I consider sufficient, and if it ever comes in contact with thy crown, I doubt not, thou wilt be of the same opinion.”

“Not till then, however!” replied Robin, by no means daunted; and laying down his sword and his bow, he took up another oak graff that was both stiff and strong, unbuckled his belt and stood forward to give his opponent an opportunity of making good his threat.

Before a blow was struck Robin looked at his opponent's staff and said, he feared that the one he held in his hand was somewhat the longer, and wished to see them measured, that he might cut a piece of his, and thus possess no advantage. The other scorned to have taken into consideration so trifling a circumstance, and told him disdainfully that in length his was eight feet and a half, and as it had knocked down many a calf, he doubted not it would knock him down.

Robin could not brook this, and therefore gave the tanner a heavy blow on his head for his insolence, by

way of beginning. This however the tanner returned with interest, and bang upon bang resounded through the wood, for the space of two hours and more ; the blood running down from each other's head in streaming profusion. They are depicted as being like two wild boars, roaring, foaming, and goring each other to death. At length Robin stayed his hand and courted peace, philosophically remarking that there they might thrash their bones to 'mesh' and get no corn at all. He likewise told him he was Robin Hood, and that if he chose he might be free in the forest.

"For which privilege," said Arthur pretty smartly, "I may thank my good staff rather than thee."

A truce was however granted, both parties feeling, as fighting parties invariably do, that a discontinuance of hard knocks is conducive to health.

Robin then enquired of his opponent what his real profession was, and learnt in reply that he was Arthur-a-Bland the tanner, and competent to tan his hide for nought, a proffered kindness which Robin could not allow to pass without saying in that case he would do him a similar favour. There was nevertheless no wish on either side to renew the combat, especially as Robin ascertained that Little John was a relative to this long-winded tanner. He therefore blew his bugle-horn, at which, in a short time, Little John shewed himself, and seeing his master in a somewhat disfigured condition, enquired what had happened, when Robin told him how severely the other had handled him.

"Well then," said Little John, "he shall now do as much for me."

“Not at all,” said Robin, “he shall rather join our brotherhood ; besides he is already your near relative, Arthur-a-Bland.”

This was sufficient. The two kinsmen immediately recognised each other as relations, and a friendly feeling was the consequence. From fighting the three men grew merry, and prefaced their union by feasting, songs and dancing.

CHAPTER XII.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BEGGAR.

HE story bearing the above title belongs to the class of single combats which we are now detailing. It introduces us, with little preamble, to Robin disposed to be merry, mounted on a gallant steed that was worth ten angels, and clad in his livery of grateful green.

Thus equipped, but without any settled purpose except the enjoyment of some frolic, he set out for Nottingham. On his way he met as jolly-looking a beggar as ever he beheld. His appearance was young and lusty, and in spite of the old patched coat he wore, and the numerous bags that hung dangling about him, he seemed to possess agility and power worthy of some higher calling than that of a beggar.

Robin's conduct on this occasion was somewhat strange. He was indeed a compound of eccentricities and incongruities, and therefore it is impossible to reconcile all he is said to have done with any specified principles. He first accosted the beggar with a wish to be told what county he belonged to, and was told Yorkshire, a piece of information accompanied, of course, with an application for relief. Robin told him he had no money, that he was a ranger and an out-law, and, what seems less becoming, that he was disposed to fight him, or as it is worded, to have a bout with him. The beggar was commanded to lay down his grey patched coat, by the side of Robin's handsome green mantle, a request with which, strange as it appears, he showed no reluctance to comply.

"I shall thrash thee," said the vagrant stripping like a young Hercules, "I shall thrash thee, and then have at thy purse, be rewarded for my trouble."

Without further to do, therefore, these two stray commoners began to maul each other in no brotherly spirit. The particulars of the fight, as handed down to us, are not very interesting, suffice it to say, that for every blow that Robin dealt to the beggar, the latter returned him three. Poor Robin, he had to encounter many a struggle; the blood began to trickle down his pate, till at length he cried out a truce.

"Not," said the beggar, "unless thou wilt resign to me thy rich green mantle."

"I will do it freely," said Robin, "together with my horse and my bravery, provided thou wilt give me thy ragged coat, bags, staff and other mendicant trappings."

The conditions were at once accepted, and both parties were satisfied with the change. As for Robin he turned round and round, and satisfied himself by the fit of the garments that he was a stout bold beggar.

“What a number of bags,” said he. “Here is one for bread, another for corn, this one for malt, and that for salt, and in this last I can put my bugle horn.”

Thus fitted out for begging, Robin resolved to solicit alms, at least so long as it suited his caprice to do so. To Nottingham therefore he repaired, with his bags dangling down to his knee, and clad in rags not worth a groat, yet withal he was in excellent spirits.

In passing along the streets of Nottingham, he heard a pitiful cry, and learnt that three men were shortly about to be hanged. Hoping to be of service, he applied to the sheriff's house, where he was accosted by a gentlemanly looking person who enquired what he, a vagrant beggar, could want there or what he wished to have,

“Neither meat nor drink,” said Robin, “but I sue for the lives of the three men condemned to die.”

“Sue as thou likest,” said the other, “thy suit is in vain, the men will assuredly be executed, as they have been already convicted of stealing the king's deer.”

Robin turned away resolved to do what he could after all. The condemned persons were shortly brought out and conducted to the gallows. Many an eye was dim with tears, even in this comparatively unrefined age, as they passed along a sad spectacle to the tree, which humanity will some day learn to dispense with; but

Robin assured all that stood near him, that they still should be saved, Such an observation however, from the mouth of a meanly clad vagabond, met with the contempt which it seemed to merit. All thought there was only one way for it, till Robin drew his horn from one of his bags, and began blowing a tremendous blast. He did not blow long, but long enough to bring a hundred bold archers to his feet supplicating orders.

“Shoot east, shoot west,” said Robin, “these three men must be rescued, they shall not be hanged.”

The command was no sooner given than twang sounded the string of a hundred bows, and down on heaps fell the officers of Justice. It was but for a moment; the ground was immediately deserted by the sheriff, and such of the company as had been spared to run away. Robin then stepped up to the three men, knocked off their fetters, and in company with his brave bow-men took them with him into the forest where they were admitted free members of the company with all customary salutations and mirth.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE RANGER.

THE ballad of Robin Hood and the ranger commences by giving us to understand, that the season when this their first acquaintance took place, was the spring of the year, when the genial influence of the returning sun had melted the ice and the snow, covered the forest trees with a fresh, warm livery of green, and caused the birds to resume their blithe merry notes ; certain indications these of brighter days.

It was at such a time as this, that Robin chose to ramble alone in the forest, frolicking as we are told with his long bow. All at once he came in sight of a person whose countenance indicated authority. His conduct was in unison with his looks, as he immediately cried out, on seeing Robin :—

“ Whither away so fast my friend ? ”

“ I am here with the intention of killing a buck or a fat doe,” said Robin, nothing daunted.

“ You had better take care,” said the ranger, “ remember these are the king’s deer, and I am one of his foresters.”

“ For thirteen long summers,” answered Robin, “ I have freely here made use of my bow and long arrows, and I see no reason why I should now be disturbed, at least by one from whom as yet I see no reasons to expect any harm.”

The forester carried with him a long quarter-staff, and had likewise a broad sword by his side, which he instantly drew, telling Robin that the question should be immediately settled by which it should be seen who had the greater right to command in that forest.

Robin had a sword likewise, that for quality was not to be despised, which he also drew and marched up to the ranger to give him battle.

The ranger was an athletic muscular man, and at the first blow showed that he was strong if not dexterous. He aimed a blow at the head of Robin which the latter partly parried and caused it to fall with its flat side downwards. In this position however it hit Robin's head and brought him to the ground. He was only stunned, and therefore on his feet again in a moment. At the next round their swords met each other with such a terrible bang that both were snapped in two, and yet neither of their owners was further injured.

Their swords were now indeed broken, but the fight was not ended, inasmuch as neither of them felt any wish to discontinue the contest. To it again therefore they went, ding dong with quarter-staff, for the space of three mortal hours, till their vestments smoked with the heat and excitement which this battle produced.

At last Robin, thinking he had tested the ranger's courage sufficiently, felt his own begin to waver and demanded a cessation. The ranger in reality nothing loath, granted his request, and the two combatants stood breathing loudly by each other's side.

"Thou art a brave fellow," then said Robin, "take this ring in token of my respect for thy valour."

He then summoned his companions with a blast of his bugle. Little John was among them clad in a rich mantle of green.

“These are my yeomen,” then said Robin, “a set of brave men as ever emptied a quiver. Wilt thou join them and thou shalt be put in immediate possession of all the honours of this free jovial company? A suit of lively green, a handsome quiver well filled with arrows, and a long bow shall be thine, only say thou wilt unite thy valour, the worth of which I have just amply tested, to the weal of our society and be one of ourselves.”

The forester gladly accepted the offer, on Robin's own terms. They killed a fat doe, and according to their usage when a new alliance was formed, spent the remainder of the day in music, dancing and feasting.

Our recruit was accoutred that very evening in the equipage that Robin had promised, and put in possession of a bow and arrows.

On the following day Robin drew out his men all in a row, and caused them all to renew their promise with an oath, that they would be true men, and remain with devoted attachment in obedience to their leader, and faithful to the interests of the company of the merry-green-wood.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE STRANGER.

IT will have been remarked that notwithstanding so many actions are recorded respecting these out-laws of the fourteenth century, very little is really known respecting the sort of home they held.

In some of the ballads they are spoken of as retiring to their caves, and, indeed, at the period when they lived, the abodes of peasants generally as compared with the cottage-homes of England now, might very properly be denominated caves. We are likewise reminded by these songs of another improvement in the convenience of life, namely the use of time-pieces, which at the time of our hero, were, if used at all, of a rude construction and chiefly confined to the wealthy.

In the song we are about to transpose, Robin appears enquiring the time of the day, and is answered by Little John, not as such a question would be answered now, by naming the exact time, but told that the day was at its prime.

Hearing this, Robin said it was time to be looking after something for dinner, and with that intention entered the more secluded parts of the forest.

While there walking about trying to find a fat doe, he beheld a stranger dressed in the apparel of a gentleman, and of a goodly appearance in other respects. His doublet is stated to have been of silk, of this fact we are sceptical, and his stockings shone like scarlet. He too was on the look out for game. Robin, unknown to the stranger, watched his movements. Shortly he came in sight of a herd of deer, feeding on an angular piece of ground. The stranger, perfectly at ease in his position, instantly drew a right good bow, and slew the best of the herd at a considerable distance from him. At this Robin showed himself, and exclaimed :—

“ Well shot, well shot ! thou art a right one, come I pray thee and join my company in the green-wood, and thou shalt be, as thou clearly meritest, of my bold yeomanry one of the boldest.”

“ Go about thy business, and that quickly,” replied the stranger, “ or thou shalt speedily know the weight of my fist.”

“ Thy fist, no doubt,” said Robin, “ is a ponderous weapon ; but I would recommend thee not to use it in an unfriendly manner against me ; for be assured did I require any assistance, I have but to blow my horn, and it would be immediately forth-coming in a manner thou wouldst but little like to see.”

“ ’T were much better for thee in that case not to sound that boasted instrument of thine ; for if it is capable of producing so much mischief,” said the stranger, “ I should make use of this my good broad sword, which I presume would complete its work, as far as

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thou art concerned, before thy trooping help-mates could answer thy summons."

Robin, being thus exasperated, drew his bow ; the stranger as nimbly drew his ; and their arrows would soon have found a warm home, had not Robin, calling to mind the consequences of this mode of fighting, cried out to the other to hold his hand, telling him that certain death to one of them must succeed the discharge of arrows.

"If nevertheless," continued Robin, "thou art anxious to give battle against me, let us draw our swords, and go under yon wide-spreading oak, where in the shade we can try our hands against each other."

"Not in the least," said the stranger, "not in the least will I flinch from my present position ; if thou darest be so rash, bring thy sword and thy buckler in front of me, and I will find both something to do."

Robin did as he was told, and even more. He not only stood before the stranger with his weapons in his hands as desired, but managed to give him a blow before he had calculated on such a mishap.

"Thou art hasty," said the stranger, drawing his broad sword, "but I will return the favour."

In what manner he redeemed his promise is not precisely told us ; but the next time that our hero makes his appearance in the ballad, it is with blood running down from every hair on his head, and asking for an armistice as a favour from his antagonist.

It is the doctrine of heroic song to create warm friendship out of the spoils of battle. The stranger

showed no civility whatever before they had fought; but afterwards he was quite social.

“Who art thou?” said Robin, after he had wiped the blood and sweat from his forehead.

“My name is Gamwell,” said the stranger, “of Maxwell, the town in which I was born and bred, and if thou wouldst know further particulars, having no fear on account of any thing thou canst do to me, since I have tested the strength of thy arm, I will tell thee that I have sought the shady solitude of this forest for concealment. I have had the misfortune to kill my father’s steward, and am therefore in peril of my life in the world I have left behind me. My purpose further is, to discover an uncle of mine who is said to dwell in the forest as an out-law, though I have been told he is a good fellow when he is rightly managed.”

“And what may be the name of this uncle of thine whom thou seekest, if one may be so bold.”

“Not bold at all,” said the other, “I wish thee to know: perhaps thou mayst be of some use in helping me to discover where he is, his name is Robin Hood.”

“Then come at once into thy uncle’s arms, for I am he whom thou seekest, thy mother’s brother, and how was it I did not recognise her features before we fought, and then thy labour and my pains would have been spared; but to tell thee the truth, my boy, I am not sorry thou hast proved thyself a true scion of a worthy stock. Henceforth we are friends in bonds more lasting than those of blood. And here comes Little John, the first man of our company.”

“Hey-day master, what are you about?” said the new comer, “I cannot understand you to-day, hugging a stranger as if he was some gently-bred lady. You have made me quite uncomfortable.”

“You have not been watching us long I hear,” said Robin, “otherwise you would have seen movements that betokened very little of love, look at my crown.”

“Dear master,” said Little John, “how has this happened? You have bled like a slaughtered ox, who has done it?”

“Thou seest this stranger,” said our hero. “He and I have drawn our swords against each other, and he has tamed me with blows till I have become as gentle as a lamb.”

“He shall tame me too then,” said Little John, “or I’ll teach him to respect his betters.”

“He does respect me,” said Robin, “and I cannot allow thee to do him any harm. He is as I have just discovered, the son of my own dear sister, and henceforth he shall be next to thee in our bold company. I, Robin Hood,—thou, Little John,—and he, Will Scadlock, will form a triple cord that shall not readily break.”*

*Before proceeding further with the subject of this ballad, which is of ancient date, being printed originally in black letter, it seems necessary to remark that some of the occurrences herein described make a large demand on our credulity, and form along with others depicted in these songs exceptions to a statement made in a previous chapter, which, to a certain extent, recommends the essential points contained in most of the ballads, as having claims to credibility little inferior to many things that have passed muster on the page of the historian.

We are willing to give to the character of these ancient heroic songs all to which they are entitled, and with this view in the chapter referred to, we assumed a position for them which some will deem too favourable.

While doing so however, without retracting what has been thus advanced in their favour, we feel it ought to be understood that exceptions such as these have, in passing along, on several occasions presented themselves to our notice.

After this introduction to each other they gathered up the fat buck which Scadlock had shot, when Robin jocularly reminded them, that notwithstanding the good things in the shape of blows which had been his portion this morning at the hands of his nephew, he had not yet broken his fast.

“We will hie,” continued he, “to yonder lodge, where we shall be well received by my bold yeomen,” and with that he blew a loud blast on his bugle, and as he expected, upwards of a hundred tall fellows presented themselves running in haste towards him. The sight of these foresters struck Scadlock with surprise and alarm. He did not know but they might be enemies, and advised his two companions to stand to their arms.

Robin laughed at his nephew and told him they were his own men, who, when they arrived, wished to know as a matter of course for what they had been summoned.

Their master told them, “that he had been engaged in a combat with the stranger whom they saw before them, and had been well beaten, but no wonder, as it had turned out that the stranger was his own nephew in the prime and vigour of youth, and,” continued Robin, “I have sent for you not for the purpose of helping me to give him a sound drubbing, but to inform you that he is one of ourselves, in point of rank or command below none except this little fellow here,” pointing to Little John. “And my will further is that his admittance as a member of our noble yeomanry be celebrated with rejoicings worthy the occasion.”

At which they all raised a cheer as merry as so many school-boys when their master has given them a half-holiday. This was a high day in the forest. Feasting, music and dancing were kept up till the orb of day had retired, and the feebler lamps of heaven peered forth upon their merriment bidding them to retire to their nightly quarters for cessation and repose.

On the following day while Robin, Little John, and Will Scadlock were traversing the green-wood talking together, about the proceedings already described, they beheld at a short distance a beautiful damsel mounted on a glossy black palfrey. Her riding dress was likewise of sable hue, and interwoven with her hair was a bough of mournful cypress, beneath which shone to the astonished eyes of our wanderers, a pair of sparkling bright eyes and cheeks whose blushes were the personification of modesty taken by surprise.

Robin thunderstruck at her appearance, thus emblematic of distress hastened towards her, and in tones of sympathy that told the earnestness of his nature enquired what might be the occasion of her dejected condition, and whether it was in his power to give her any assistance.

“I am from London,” answered the fair lady, “that city once so happy, but now, alas! surrounded by the arms of a proud alien prince, who swears by his rude right hand, that unless our gracious sovereign deliver up to him his fair daughter the royal princess, he will destroy the city and lay waste the kingdom.”

“And is there then no other alternative offered by this martial prince?”

“I fear me none,” said the lady with tears dropping from her bright eyes which rendered her presence doubly interesting. “I fear me none, and yet I had hoped to find enough of true valour to rid the country of these boasting champions.”

“If it be in the power of true valour,” said Robin, “to render thee assistance fair lady, thou wilt do well to explain further to me the purport of thy mission.”

Re-assured, the lady continued, “this proud prince has indeed offered one other alternative, and with the view of meeting it, myself and three other confidantes of the princess are abroad in different parts of the kingdom; but ah! I fear me, we are doomed to defeat, as I have met with no one that will venture life and limb to rescue the unfortunate princess from the iron rule by which she is threatened. You must know,” the lady added, “that this alien prince is of gigantic stature, and he has selected two chosen warriors from his army as warlike and powerful as himself, and has further declared that unless three native warriors can be found before next Midsummer-day, that shall meet them, three to three, he will seize the princess, or burn the city and lay waste the country.”

“And what is to be expected should three natives be found daring and valiant enough to fight and conquer these insulting strangers?”

“All the honours that a monarch can confer, together with the hand of the princess, who is now inconsolable at the thought of shortly being the spouse of such a stern and ill-favoured monster.”

“By midsummer-day, didst thou say?” again enquired Robin.

“That is the time the insulting foreigner has fixed before which true valour may be the means of saving the princess and the kingdom.”

This intelligence struck Robin to the quick. He hrew himself down on the ground, and gnashing his teeth, exhibited signs of dreadful internal discomposure.

“What is the matter uncle?” asked Will Scadlock. “Have the bright eyes of this fair damsel bewitched thee.”

“It is not the fate of her,” said Robin, “that perplexes me, but that of the princess whose imminent peril we have just so unexpectedly learnt, but if it be, or if it be not, in the power of my arm to relieve her, I will go immediately to London and attempt her rescue.”

“If thou goest,” said Little John, “I will go with thee. Whatever danger thou darest encounter shall not be shunned by me.”

“Away so soon,” said Will Scadlock, “but are not three wanted? The damsel named three and I therefore will make the third and then we shall complete the match, and if we fall, we fall together.”

These words of his companions,—the promptitude and decision with which they were uttered,—the known valour and warlike address of his two fellows, completely restored Robin to his wonted cheerfulness. He hugged and embraced them both; so warmly did he feel their attachment to him on this occasion.

“ We will clothe ourselves in gray mixture, and in our hands carry long staves, and thus with a scrip and bottle by our sides, shall we pass for pilgrims journeying from the Holy Land.”

Thus equipped as holy men, the three immediately set out on their journey to London. In deeds of chivalry good fortune seems pretty generally to have accompanied the brave; for just as they reached London, they found the young princess about to be led forth to be handed over to the prince of Arragon, as a victim to the capricious passions of an insulting conquerer, in order to ward off the destruction of the city.

The following day was midsummer-day, when unless three men should appear, bold, brave, and reckless of life enough to meet these three foreign warriors, the princess would be lost.

On the morrow therefore in proud triumph stood forth the contemptuous prince by the side of his two chosen warriors, and exclaimed :—

“ I come to claim the daughter of your monarch, since your land is so sterile of warriors that no champions can be found. By Alcaron I swear that London shall burn if she is not my bride this evening.”

The king and the queen stood forward, clad in the deepest mourning, yet possessing a dignity and grace which heart-felt sorrow sometimes touchingly displays, exclaiming :—

“ We come to make the sacrifice. Our duty to our city and country requires that nothing on our part shall be spared to preserve their safety. Here is our daughter.”

“Not so fast my liege,” cried out Robin Hood, who with his two companions, had forced their way to the scene of action, “not so fast,—a princess so young and beautiful was never intended for a barbarian tyrant.”

There was silence for a moment, only a half-stifled murmur could be heard in the distant crowd, when the prince of Arragon called aloud:—

“Who dares to arrest the proceedings? Can any one be so rash as to dare me to the combat? Let me behold him and if a frown of mine do not silence him, my good sword shall.”

“Thy frown,” replied Robin, “to me is as harmless as thy words. I defy thee, here is my gage, and as for those giant-looking barbarians, thy fellows, I have two lads with me that will give them a civilizing lesson.”

A buzz of satisfaction now vibrated through the crowd. The king and queen ventured to smile, and the countenance of the princess was for a moment unveiled, that she might look upon the new comers. Complete armour for the three was immediately ordered by the king, and no sooner were our foresters clad in the same, than they appeared to swell out into formidable proportions, being hale, strong, lusty men and no strangers to the game at which they were about to play. Trumpets were sounded and the combatants stood each face to face, Robin being determined to let no one have the honour of fighting the prince but himself.

The fight was hot and obstinate. The prince appeared to be more than a match for Robin, as he

succeeded, almost at the commencement of the battle, in giving him a stunning blow that made him stagger on the field. He quickly however recovered his position and his courage being fully roused, he peered into the countenance of the prince with the eye of an angry lion, and exclaiming :—

“Thy divorce is signed—here it is!” aimed a blow at his throat, which, his antagonist failing to parry, brought him to the ground, his head in one part of the field and his body in the other. The spectators here gave a loud burst of applause, while the king and the queen wept aloud for joy.

The fight was however not ended. Little John seeing what had happened sprang forward again at his adversary crying out :—

“Take care of thy head or thou wilt lose it,” which put the other off his guard, and enabled Little John, while the giant was defending his head, to plunge his sword into his heart, causing him to fall on the ground a ghastly corpse.

Will Scadlock was still at work, and hearing that he was the last to conquer, pressed his foe with such determined spirit that he brought him down upon his knees.

“This is not enough,” said Will “the devil must have you all!” giving him as he spoke a stab with his sword that required no second blow ; he rolled over on the ground, a huge fallen giant terrible even in death.

The fight was now over, and there arose one general hurrah, such as the English alone know how to raise,

which continued till the king, queen and princess came forward, craving an audience.

When silence had been restored, the king called aloud to the champions, desiring to know the names of the three heroes that had come thus disguised, with noble blood in their veins, to rescue the princess and save the kingdom.

Robin Hood at this walked up to the king, and falling on his kness, begged pardon for himself, and his company the out-laws in the forest.

“To be sure,” said the king, “I will grant any thing thou askest; but art thou indeed that same Robin Hood, whose fame has so frequently reached my ear. Well, thou art a valiant champion, and thy valour shall be rewarded. I promised my daughter to him who should be successful in ridding me of those proud aliens; but as there are three of you, how am I to keep my plighted word?”

“Let the princess, thy daughter, most gracious liege, make her choice. The laws of the forest are opposed to restraint.”

“Thou speakest well,” said the king. “Thou speakest nobly,” said the queen, taking her daughter by the hand, who stood fixed with admiration and gratitude, gazing modestly on the successful champions.

“I declare my choice to be the one whose noble arm brought down the last of the giants. He is a comely youth.”

“Bravely chosen,” cried out bold Robin, “the choice has fallen on young Gamwell, my sister’s son.”

At this part of the proceedings, a nobleman by name Earl Maxfield, stood forth, and looked strangely interested and perplexed at what he beheld.

“That youth,” said he, “pardon me my liege, that youth is the very image of a son of mine, if he be still living, and his name is likewise Gamwell.”

“I am not the image of thy son, dear father,” said the youth, “but thy own child,—thy own Gamwell,” at the same time falling on his bosom with the tenderest emotion.

The story is ended when we have said, that conformably to the promise of the king, and the choice of the princess the marriage ceremony took place, and many a pleasant hour of merriment did the recital of these surprising events afford to the company of the greenwood, when their master returned again to share their dangers and fortune.

CHAPTER XV.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE SHEPHERD.

N the song of Robin Hood and the shepherd, our hero and his true companion Little John, are made to come off second best in a quarrel. Many of the fights with single individuals terminated, according to song, in the defeat of Robin, and the alliance of the conquerer with the company in the forest. The shepherd is an exception to the rule, and we cannot perceive in what respects this ballad tends to the glory either of Robin or his associates, but we are anticipating our story.

The out-law's life, however, full of incidents, must necessarily have caused him to be often apparently idle. In some respects it resembles that of an angler, who has to sit idling often many an hour without a nibble. Thus it was with Robin, at least so we understand it. One of those days as he was thus sauntering about, we find him come unexpectedly into the presence of a shepherd, who was lying carelessly on the ground, with his hook, bag and bottle by his side. Had not Robin been in want of better employment it would apparently have been very easy for him to go quietly on; but this suited not his views. He had found a stranger of a strong

muscular appearance, and he wanted to know what he was made of, for the sake of a little pastime. He therefore walked towards him and demanded what he had got in his bag and bottle. The stranger does not himself appear to have shown much courtesy, as he answered very roughly, and replied:—

“What is that to thee? Am I under any necessity of making thee acquainted with what I choose to carry with me? Pray what is thy motive or authority for asking?”

“I have no authority whatever except my good sword hanging here by my side; but with this warrant I intend tasting of thy bottle.”

“The devil a drop shalt thou have as tall as thou seemest, and as proudly as thou carriest thy head, notwithstanding that bauble of a sword to which thou disdainfully referrest.”

“And wilt thou sooner fight me than allow me a drop out of thy bottle? Thou art a surly cur I warrant thee.”

“Abuse me as thou likest,” said the shepherd, “the bottle lies there, but so long as I lie by the side of it there is no fear that thou wilt meddle with it.”

“A draught of ale,” said Robin, “is a small thing to fight for, but as thou seemest to be in a quarrelsome mood, I will stake twenty gold pieces against twenty of thine, and the winner shall carry away all.”

And to show that he was in earnest, Robin threw down on the ground twenty pieces of the precious metal. The sound and sight of the gold caused the shepherd to raise his head, as he observed:—

“ I have no gold pieces to stake, otherwise I would accept thy terms most willingly ; but such as I have namely, my bag and my bottle, I will gladly hazard against thy pretty shiners. Nor do I desire any other weapon than this long hook, against that toy of a sword of thine, on which thou so confidently reckonest.”

“ Thy stake is sufficient,” said Robin, “ thou at least wilt have something to fight for, but wilt find it no easy task to gain that glittering wealth.”

“ Be it so,” said the shepherd, “ only cease prating I never knew any one that had so much to say aught but a coward.”

Blows were now for a long time the only communication that passed between them. Robin with his sword, the shepherd with his hook. It kept Robin completely beyond his distance, and had it not been for his buckler and the use he made of his weapon in turning off the heavy blows the shepherd gave, the battle would have been a very short one. Robin's skill at fencing may be gathered from the statement, that for every blow the shepherd gave, the sword of Robin cried twang. At length, when blows from the shepherd's hook came more rapidly than Robin found convenient, his head and shoulders came in for a share as well as his sword and buckler. This was a state of things that could not last.

Exhausted partly with loss of blood, and still more with the hard labour he had undergone, in this singular mode of enjoying pastime, Robin sank on the ground.

“ I will not strike thee whilst thou art down,” said the shepherd, “ thou shalt have fair play ; but get up

quickly I pray thee, I want to have hold of thy money and be gone."

"Before I rise again," said Robin, "just do me the favour to hand me that bugle-horn. So much fighting and so little music is not exactly to my taste."

"Blow as thou pleasest," said the other, handing him the horn, "thy breath methinks may perhaps be wanted before night, unless thou art prepared to yield me the prize."

Robin having got hold of his horn, blew it with all his might, and presently Little John appeared in sight without any other attendant.

"Who is that?" said the shepherd, as soon as he saw him advancing.

"It is my friend Little John," said Robin, "or rather my man, whose arm I intend to employ instead of my own during this contest."

"What do you want master?" said the new comer, "you seem rudely attended."

"My case is a bad one I own," said Robin, "this shepherd's hook is a terrible thing in his hands, he has been beating me with it these six hours, and I can bear it no longer."

"Then it is my turn now master," said Little John. Here shepherd, this way, I am my master's deputy—thou shalt either fight or flee."

"Flee I never," said the shepherd, "thou indeed lookest an awkward customer, but my hook shall manage thee."

So they fell to it in good earnest, while Robin lay at his ease looking on.

Little John at the commencement felt quite sure of an easy conquest, over one already more than half worn out ; but in this particular he changed his opinion, as soon as the shepherd had given him a sturdy blow under the chin, with his formidable hook.

“I dont like thy way of beginning friend,” said Little John, “I will return thee this in some way or other or else worse shall come of it.”

“Dont grumble so man,” said the other, “I have plenty more of the same kind, thou wilt become accustomed to them after a while, unless thou thinkest good to yield that I may go about my business.”

This was galling to the temper of Little John, and Robin seeing the shepherd on the one hand dealing his blows with a full-handed liberality, and the rage of John on the other just awakening into a fury, called aloud to the combatants to cease, saying the shepherd had won his wager, and should have the gold. Little John never disobeyed his master, so after complimenting the shepherd and his hook on the address he had displayed, the business was settled.

Thus as the ballad concludes, were Robin Hood and Little John, both on one day, worsted in battle by a single shepherd, a circumstance without a parallel in the history of the company in the green-wood.

CHAPTER XVI.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE CURTALL FRIAR.

E have already stated that a life spent in the woods and supported by the spoils of the chase, presents itself to us adorned with many natural attractions. Such descriptions are always taken in summer time, the woods are always green, and the choristers therein ever in full song. It would spoil all the charm to enter into the details of a winter's sojourn in such a home, exposed to rain and snow.

The bards of the times knew their business better than to dwell on such particulars. In those days, like the golden age of the poets, there was an unchanging summer, or to be more classically correct, an eternal spring; so at least we see them, and it is not our wish to spoil an agreeable picture, even for the sake of having a better portrait.

The adventure with Robin and the curtall friar, occurred of course in summer, when the forest was in the pride of its beauty. His men were in high spirits and full of play. If the woods enjoyed a perpetual spring, with equal certainty the foresters were endowed with unending youth, and were, as we are told on this occasion, filled with a love of activity and merriment.

Some of them were running, some leaping, some practising with the bow, and all were happy.

While they were thus engaged Robin took a turn among them and said:—

“Which of you can kill a buck, or which of you can kill a doe, or a fine Grecian hart at the distance of five hundred feet.”

Many voices answered in the affirmative, and to prove their professed skill, some of them entered the haunts of the deer, and brought to the ground the objects of their aim. Scadlock killed one, Midge another, but Little John's shot was the most telling performance. He slew a fine fat hart at the full distance of five hundred feet.

“That's the boy for me,” said Robin, “I would ride my horse a hundred miles to find his equal at shooting.”

Whether from a little private jealousy at Robin's unqualified approval of his superior rival, or from the real merits of the case, we profess not to determine; but his observation caused Scadlock to laugh, as if Robin had been praising his friend somewhat vainly and proudly.

“What art thou laughing at?” enquired Robin.

“O, I am only thinking how partially you have expressed yourself just now.”

“Why,” said Robin, “dost thou not think the shooting good?”

“Undoubtedly,” answered Scadlock, “but I know a curtall friar that would easily beat either Little John or thyself.”

“Where does he dwell?” then enquired Robin smartly.

“At Fountain’s Abbey,” replied Scadlock, “you have not a hundred miles to ride to find him : and I tell you further, he would not only beat you and Little John, but all your bold yeomen in a row.”

Robin was moved by this assertion, and took a solemn oath in the name of the virgin, that he would neither eat nor drink till he had seen this prodigy. He then clad himself in a suit of complete armour. On his head he wore a cap of steel, a buckler for his breast, a sword by his side, and a bow in his hand with a sheaf of arrows attached to his girdle. Thus prepared, he hied to Fountain’s Abbey, and surprising though it appears, found the friar walking by the side of a wide shallow river, likewise clad in armour of exquisite workmanship. His appearance was noble and manly, and Robin beheld him as a person of no ordinary importance.

Robin alighted from his horse, tied him to a thorn, and walking up to the friar without any previous introduction, said to him :

“Carry me over the water thou curtall friar, or it may be, thy life is in peril.”

The friar without expressing the least surprise at a request so unusual, took Robin upon his back, and without speaking a single word bore him to the other side. When they had crossed, Robin leapt nimbly from the friar’s back, and had scarcely set his foot on the ground, before his new acquaintance said to him :—

“Carry me back again over the water, thou proud fellow, or thou shalt suffer for thy madness.”

On hearing this, Robin, with equally good temper, took the friar on his back and made his way through the water to the other side in perfect silence. When this was done and no breach of the peace had occurred, and as Robin still wanted to bring out the friar in a quarrel, he repeated his former request, with an intimation that a refusal would lead to blows. The friar however again took up Robin, and without speaking, walked with him steadily till he came into the middle of the stream, when he tumbled Robin headlong into the river, saying—

“There, there, proud fellow! please thyself, sink or swim, please thyself.”

Robin preferred swimming and made his way to the shore where grew a large bunch of broom. The friar likewise made his way to the shore, at a different point, and got out by the side of a clump of young willows.

After Robin had reached the shore, he considered war as already declared against him by the friar, in consequence of this unreasonable ducking which he had just received. He therefore laid hold of his bow, and drew one his best arrows from his belt, which he shot at the friar. He hit the friar clearly enough, for Robin was seldom known to miss the object at which he aimed, but the friar being clad in a steel corslet, took no harm. Observing Robin's movements, and knowing that his armour was arrow-proof, he ridiculed his shooting and told him to shoot on till night, it would only be like half a day's rain in summer which would do him no injury.

Robin did indeed continue to shoot till he had not an arrow left. They then met each other with their swords and steel bucklers, and fought furiously till towards evening, when Robin dropped on his knees to beg a favour of his antagonist.

“What is the boon thou askest?” said the friar.

“Only,” said Robin, “that thou wilt allow me to blow three blasts on my horn.”

“Blow till thy eyes drop out for aught I care,” said the other.

He had not blown long however, before half a hundred yeomen bold, with bows already bent, came running over the lea.

“Whose men are these?” said the friar somewhat disconcerted.

“They are mine,” replied Robin, “but it is not thy business to ask.”

“Surely it is,” returned the friar, “our position is no longer equal, but as I have granted thee the liberty of blowing thy horn, thou canst not deny me a similar favour.”

“What is thy request?” said Robin.

“Only that thou wilt allow me to whistle three times with my fist.”

“That can never be denied, make as much music with thy fist as thou pleasest, I don’t see how that can effect me.”

The friar nevertheless convinced him of the contrary as he had not whistled long before half a hundred good band-dogs came running across the lea to their master.

"We shall now be able to proceed with business," said the friar. "Here is a dog to each man of thine, and I myself for thee."

"By no means," said Robin, "I want no more than my share, I have tried thee already, and would prefer two of thy dogs instead."

His suggestion was taken. Two dogs immediately attacked him one behind and another before, and speedily tore his Lincoln green mantle from his back. His men made use of their bows; but whether they shot east or west, the dogs were so well trained, that they caught the arrows in their mouths. By some unexplained means however, Little John was too much for the vigilance of the dogs. He found a method of shooting them, the fatality of which they could not avoid. Satisfied of this he walked up to the friar, and told him to call his dogs away, otherwise he would do it himself for them and him. The friar enquired how or where he had obtained authority to dictate to him, and received for answer that he was one of the noble company, and as for his authority he drew his bow, and showed the friar he could kill his dogs. He was obliged to kill half a score however before the friar was sufficiently satisfied of his abilities to cause him to sue for a truce, which he did by requesting Little John to hold his hand, till his master Robin and himself had settled their dispute.

Nothing could be more to Robin's mind, than a wish on the part of the friar to come to terms, as he was anxious to number so brave a fellow among his own men.

“Wilt thou accompany me into the green wood,” said Robin, “and leave this abbey, and thou shalt be liberally treated. Every sunday in the year, thou shalt have a noble for thy fee, and every holiday shall bring with it a change of garments.”

“I have been at Fountain’s Abbey near twice seven long years,” said the friar, “and have been tempted by knight, lord and earl, to leave it and dwell in splendour with them, but have hitherto firmly refused; nevertheless the freedom of the wild wood is very attractive, and to be one of thy band of noble followers is an honour which I cannot forego. I will therefore leave this happy vale and return with thee to the wood—the free, merry, green, wild wood.”

CHAPTER XVII.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE TINKER.

HILE on a journey to Nottingham, Robin Hood once met with a tinker, and perceiving him to be a well-proportioned, brisk, active young man, he entered into social conversation with him.

“Do you live at Nottingham?” enquired Robin.

“No,” replied the other, “I live at Banbury, and my trade is a tinker.”

“A tinker!” ejaculated Robin, “then you have heard the news I guess.”

“What news? I have heard none,” said his fellow.

“The news about the two tinkers being put into the stocks for drinking ale and beer,” said Robin.

“I don’t call that news which every body knows,” argued the tinker, “and if I may be guided by thy looks it strikes me, that, wert thou to be put into the stocks every time thou drinkest good ale when thou canst get it, I should say thou wouldst be seldom out.”

“I rarely turn my lips away from good ale I grant thee,” said Robin, “but no more of this. Hast thou any news? methinks going about from place to place as thou dost, thou wilt learn the news on its first coming out.

“ I cannot exactly say,” replied the other, “ that I have heard any news of late worth naming, the little I have heard is certainly good as far as it goes.”

“ What may it be,” impatiently asked Robin.

“ Oh, only that there is an attempt now being made to take a notorious outlaw called Robin Hood. I myself hold a commission, and am in possession of a warrant from the king for that purpose.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Robin, “ this recital surprises me. Is it really a fact that thou art so highly honoured ? and art thou to receive any reward if thou art successful ? ”

“ I shall obtain one hundred pounds whenever I am lucky enough to lay my hands on him,” was the reply.

“ One hundred pounds ! a warrant from the king ! ” repeated Robin. “ Wouldst thou favour me with the warrant, perhaps I may be able to assist thee.”

“ That I will not do,” said the tinker, “ but if thou knowest his whereabouts, and wilt aid me in taking him, thou shalt at least share in the reward.”

“ I have no doubt we shall find him at Nottingham,” remarked Robin.

“ Dost thou think so,” said the tinker, turning to go with his companion, “ then let us hasten thither at once. I have this good crabtree cudgel that never yet flinched a hair, and thou hast a blade by thy side, we shall have nothing to fear, although he is accounted an awkward customer to deal with.

To Nottingham therefore they hastened, and walking into an inn, called for ale and wine of which they drank

freely, so freely in fact, that the tinker forgot all his plans and promised rewards, and fell asleep in a state of inebriation.

During these unseasonable slumblers, Robin contrived to leave the house unperceived, and when the tinker awoke, he was astonished to find that his companion had fled with the reckoning unsettled. He was therefore under the necessity of discharging the cost of the whole evening, and what was still more annoying, he found the warrant from the king for taking Robin Hood, of which he was not a little proud no longer in his possession. It may therefore be imagined that he indulged no very kindly feelings towards his late acquaintance, and yet he was of that cast of mind to recognise, even in the trick that had just been played him, a waggishness of manner that carried with it some venial qualities.

It was however not the less galling, and he did not forget in his own mind to vow, that should an opportunity ever occur, he would be straight with his acquaintance. In this state of mind he summoned the landlord, and feeling for his purse in order to settle the account, became more furious than ever, as he found that it too had been taken with the warrant.

“What has happened?” said the landlord.

“You saw the person that drank with me last night.”

“I did,” replied the other.

“Well, do you know, the villain has not only left without paying the score, but has robbed me of my purse, and taken with him an instrument which I value more than all the rest, namely a warrant from the king for the capture of Robin Hood.”

“Robin Hood!” said the landlord, “why it was Robin that was drinking with you last night.”

“The devil it was,” said the tinker, now quite overcome and roaring out, “Oh that I had known! Oh that I had known.”

Burning therefore with shame and revenge, he determined if possible to meet again the author of these late calamities, and enquired of his host if he knew where he was likely to be met with.

“He’s a stray colt that friend of yours,” said the landlord, “but the place of all others most likely, is in the forest among the king’s deer, that is his home, if indeed so wild a character may be said to have a home.”

“I will find him if possible, now trust me, and if I do chance to meet him, I’ll trust this good cudgel no more, if I do not make my own of him.”

To the forest of Sherwood therefore he directed his steps, and after wandering about for several days discovered him pursuing some deer, clad in his wonted costume of Lincoln green.

“Hey there!” the tinker called aloud, “I want to have a word with thee.”

“What is thy will with me, thou pedlar-looking knave,” answered Robin.

“Thou art wrong in thy reckoning, proud archer, if thou deemest me a knave, but my errand is to ascertain by means of this good crabtree cudgel whether thou or I have done the most wrong.”

“If that is the purport of thy calling, although I am

now very busy, it is a message that must be attended to."

Drawing his sword meanwhile as he advanced towards the tinker.

They looked at each other only for a moment, before they fell to work with the ferocity of two wild boars.

The tinker fought with a determination of purpose that made every blow tell on the sword of his antagonist, who proud of his qualifications as a fencer, kept the greater part of them from doing him any material injury for a long time. He even contrived to give the tinker a blow or two, that as the ballad asserts, almost made him flee; but the vigour and earnestness of the tinker at length prevailed. Robin's good fencing was not always successful in warding off the unflinching crab-tree, and hard as Robin was, it is a mistake to suppose that he ever really liked hard blows. Finding them now in too great plenty, he begged as a boon a short respite.

"Thou shalt rest," replied the other, "when I have hanged thee on this tree, thou treacherous dog, remember thy doings at Nottingham."

Robin seeing that he was to atone for his previous faults, seized a moments pause, and blew his horn, which brought Little John and Scadlock instantly to the place. This put an end to the quarrel.

Little John indeed tried hard to get the tinker to fight him, but Robin was more anxious that the latter should join their brotherhood, and to induce him to do so, he offered him a hundred pounds a year, with a full share in all the profits of this their lucrative business,

at the same time paying him a high compliment on the manner he had conducted himself during the fight, intimating that he was a man all metal, constitutionally and by trade.

In conclusion the tinker joined the company, and was made a free member of the community in the usual way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROBIN HOOD AND ALLIN-A-DALE.

AS Robin Hood in the forest stood, commences the ballad which details the particulars of this story, he became aware a that stranger, a young man was near him, dressed in the gayest possible attire, as if for some uncommon festival.

Scarlet in those days seems to have been accounted a suitable colour to dress in on gay occasions, hence perhaps our military scarlet, and thus the young man is described as being arrayed in scarlet red, in scarlet fine and gay, singing aloud in the fullness of a light merry heart.

The following day however, the same young man showed himself in very sober trim, and with looks dejected. The scarlet dress, and the light hearted song were no more ; but on the contrary, he kept constantly stopping and turning round to weep.

Under circumstances so altered, Midge, the miller's son, and Little John walked up to the young man, and rather with a view to his relief, than for the purpose of injuring him, told him he must accompany them into the presence of their master.

When he appeared before their chief, Robin asked him if he had got any money for him and his men, to which the young man replied, that he had nothing valuable in the world, except five shillings and a ring, which he had held in his possession seven long years, intended for his wedding, which was to have taken place the previous day with a young lady, whom he had long and passionately loved, but whom her father that day, contrary to the wishes of his betrothed, was going to marry to a rich old knight, and thus, added he, will the fondly cherished hopes of years, and the joy of my life, be blighted in an hour.

This simple tale caused Robin to spring from his seat, and pace about in the greatest excitement.

"How far distant is the place," asked Robin, "where the ceremony is to take place?"

"Only five short miles," said the young man, whose name was Allin-a-Dale.

"What wilt thou give me," said Robin, "to restore to thee thy bride, thy own true love whom thou deplorest."

"Alas sir!" said the young man, "I have nothing to give, but if thou canst effect a thing so desirable I will faithfully and truly hold myself obligated to do thee service as long as life shall remain."

Touched with the young man's devotion to his betrothed, Robin instantly set out with the intention of effecting a rescue, and never halted till he came to the church at which the wedding was about to take place.

The bishop who was about to marry the young lady to the knight, espied Robin, and walking up to him, enquired who and what he was. Robin told him he was a harper and one of the best in the north.

"I am heartily glad," replied the bishop, "I love music on the harp, and as there is going to be a splendid wedding, thy services will be required, we shall want music."

He had scarcely made this observation before a crazy old knight as bridegroom, and a beautiful young woman as bride, presented themselves at the door of the church.

"I object to this match," said Robin, "it is not to my mind at all. The laws of this country allow every maiden a free choice of her lovers. If she prefers this gentleman, pointing to the knight, to any one else whom I shall produce she shall marry him; but if not she shall marry the one whom she most loves." The lady smiled most benignly at Robin; while the old knight looked furious, and seemed disposed to urge his friends to kick Robin out of the church.

Robin's horn however had given a signal as soon as he reached the church, and he had now on the ground twice as many friends as the knight, so that the latter had nothing to hope for, were physical force to be the means of deciding who was to be bridegroom. The

marriage ceremony being thus for the present delayed, Robin called aloud the name Allin-a-Dale, at which the lady's blushes were distinctly visible through the thin white veil with which her face was covered. Allin immediately stepped forward in spite of the frowns of the knight, and the lady at once rushed into his arms, flushed with rapturous excitement.

"To which of these suitors then," said Robin to the lady, "is it thy will to be married."

"To Allin-a-Dale," distinctly responded the bride, "to my own dear Allin," holding him at the same time firmly by the arm.

The knight at this went up to the bishop, and whispering something in his ear, put into his hand two gold pieces. After this the bishop stepped forward and said:—

"I can only marry the lady to the knight, her lawful spouse. Allin-a-Dale's name has not been properly published three times as the law requires.

"If that be all," said Robin, "we will soon remedy that defect;" and pulling off the bishop's cloak, he put it upon his own fac-totum Little John, who immediately very gravely walked up to the altar to perform the ceremony in the stead of the bishop, and as the song jocularly remarks, lest three times publishing should not be enough, he published the name of Allin-a-Dale and that of his bride seven times. After which with all due decorum he married them, using the ring which Allin had still retained in his possession.

When he came to the part of the service: "who

giveth this woman to be the wife of the newly-come bridegroom," Robin answered:—

"I do, and if any one attempts to take her from him he shall pay dearly for his rudeness."

The marriage ceremony therefore proceeded without further obstacle, and Allin returned with his loving bride to the merry green wood, where music and dancing ended the day, the brightest and happiest in the history of Allin-a-Dale.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROBIN HOOD'S PROGRESS TO NOTTINGHAM.

SIT it would be utterly impossible, from the materials that exist to arrange the various exploits of our hero, in any chronological order, we have entirely disregarded the consideration, so that some of the stories of his early youth will no doubt follow others that belong to a more recent date. This will in no wise affect their value when it is perceived that no regard is paid to chronological arrangement, whereas had a plan of this sort been attempted, so little is really known, that nothing satisfactory could have been effected, failure would have been unavoidable. The incidents in this song refer to a time when Robin was only fifteen years of age: hence these remarks. At this age then, to follow

our authority, Robin had learnt that a shooting-match was announced to take place at Nottingham, under the auspices of the king, the scene of many of Robin's irregularities, whither he repaired, and at an inn met with fifteen foresters drinking beer, ale, and wine. He had not been long in their company, before he told them that he had come with his bow, in order to enter the list of archers and contend for the prize.

The foresters looked down with disdain upon his beardless appearance, and ordered him to go home to his mother, and not interfere with things above his years.

"I'll wager twenty marks," said young Robin, "that I can hit a mark, or kill a hart at the distance of one hundred rods."

"Done," said the foresters, "that is more than we can do, thou boasting boy. Thy money and thy folly will shortly part company."

The distance was then measured off, and contrary to the expectations of all present, Robin hit the mark, and slew the hart in a style of the first order. The foresters fell back ashamed and vexed, and even refused to give up the wager, although Robin contended truly enough, that if it had been for a thousand pounds he had won.

"We will not give up the money nevertheless," said the foresters, "begone about thy business, proud youth, or we will baste thy sides for thee."

This excited Robin's impetuous temper, and he therefore withdrew to a great distance, and drew his bow against this body of foresters, with such good aim

that before any of them could either catch, or hit him with an arrow, he had brought fourteen of them to the ground.

The one that had specially disdained Robin's youthful pretensions he pointedly noted, and told him, just as he was about to give him an arrow, to remember he had said he was no archer, and with that pulling the string of his bow, he split his head in twain.

"You may form what opinion you like now of my archery," said Robin, "I have an idea that your wives will deem me somewhat too expert, as they will have not a little nursing of you before the wounds which my broad arrows have made are perfectly well."

The story declares that some lost their legs, some their arms, and some 'their blood did lose;' but as for Robin none knew anything of him, except that he had disappeared in the secret recesses of the forest, leaving the people of Nottingham to tell, as they attended the funerals of the slain, how a youth of fifteen had been and beaten their famous archers at shooting, and because they had refused to give up the wager, he had turned his arrows against themselves, and slain or maimed nearly the entire body.

CHAPTER XX.

THE JOLLY PINDER OF WAKEFIELD, WITH ROBIN HOOD,
SCARLET, AND JOHN.

THE company of Robin Hood was a collection of singular characters, and the method their chief adopted for canvassing for recruits without a parallel. There are few however that stood the test with greater hardihood than the Pinder of Wakefield green. On several occasions, Robin was beaten by new acquaintances, and on one Little John had his bravery severely tested after Robin had succumbed, but on the one under consideration, Robin Hood, Scarlet, and John, severally had experience of the soldierly qualities of the jolly pinder of Wakefield.

It would seem this jovial personage was first seen by the outlaws above-named, sitting under a thorn singing a song in praise of his own prowess, the burden of which was that neither knight, squire, nor baron, dare make a trespass on the fair green of Wakefield, but to the pinfold his pledge must go.

Nothing could be more to the taste of our excursionists than the company of such a man, proud of his office, proud of his singing, and proud of his own physical endowments.

The pinder however was the first to betoken a disposition to be quarrelsome.

“You must turn again, young fellows,” said he, “you have left the king’s highway and are tracking the corn, I cannot allow such conduct, you must turn again, I am the pinder.”

“I wonder you don’t shame,” said Robin, “to attempt to disconcert the purposes of three individuals like us, seeing you are but one, take care or such interference may cause you trouble.”

On hearing this the pinder jumped up, and set his back against a thorn, and his foot against a stone, and there he fought with the three travellers the greater part of a long summer’s day, so long in fact that the swords of the attacking party, striking against his buckler, were severally broken in their hands.

“Hold your hands, hold your hands,” at length cried Robin, “thou art the best swordsman ever I encountered, pray leave off thy pinder’s craft and come with us into the green wood, and thou shalt be treated with the respect due to thy valour. I am the outlaw, bold Robin Hood, and if thou wilt come along with me, two good suits of livery shalt thou have in the year, one of bright Lincoln green, and one of sober brown. Come, thou jolly pinder, come with me.”

There was in Robin’s manner a blunt free-heartedness that commanded general sympathy, and when he made an earnest appeal he was seldom denied. The pinder at once felt himself captivated by Robin’s address, offered his new friends beef, bread and good

ale, and consented to be one of their party, deferring his entry only till Michaelmas time should arrive, when he would be paid his yearly fee, and be at liberty to undertake such employment as suited his tastes. His song then was :—

“ Hey for the merry green wood. Hey down, down, an a down.”

CHAPTER XXI.

ROBIN HOOD AND QUEEN KATHERINE.

THE materials of this ballad are not very explicit and it requires some little exercise of the imagination or conjecture to elicit a straight-forward consistent narrative therefrom. Our gleanings however amount to something like the following.

For some reasons it seems the king and the queen were disposed to have a display of the skill of the best archers in the kingdom, and either from a private dispute or a political manœuvre, their majesties on this occasion divided their patronage, the king supporting or protecting those who were to contend against the archers under the auspices of the queen.

Animated with the feelings of a generous nature, and not wishing that her party should be beaten, the queen resolved if possible to bring into the field, the noted outlaw called Robin Hood, whose fame as an

archer was noised through the length and breadth of the land. She knew she had influence sufficient with the king to gain him permission, though an outlaw, to appear before his majesty and retire with impunity, but it was not so easy to get hold of Robin in order to submit to him the purport of her intentions. A generous queen is however mostly well attended, and her wishes seldom fail to find some one willing to make them a reality.

With the view therefore to avail herself of this celebrated archer, our hero, at the approaching match, she summoned her favourite page, by name Richard Patrington, into her chamber, and told him that she wished for the love he bore to her service, to post immediately to Nottingham, and, by all means in his power, to search out the famous outlaw Robin Hood, whom he would be likely to find in some of the ancient woods in that district, and that having found him, he was to summon him on behalf of the queen, by whom he would be well received, to come immediately with him to London, to serve on her behalf at a great shooting match that was going to be held by the king on Finsbury field. Richard Patrington having received his commission, and anxious, as all good subjects should be, to please the queen, hastened towards the north in search of bold Robin.

Having by dint of speed, reached Nottingham in three days, he took up his quarters at an inn, resolving there to make enquiries relative to the business on which he was travelling. To make himself at home,

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and convince the landlord of his importance, he called for a bottle of Rhenish wine and drank a health to his queen.

By his side at the inn, there sat a stout yeoman who learning he was from London, and like many yeomen in our day being a little curious, enquired:—

“What might be the business of the page so far north?”

Patrington was glad the question had been asked, and told him without any restraint, that he was seeking Robin Hood to persuade him to go and be one of the queen’s archers at the match about to take place at Finsbury.

The yeoman heard the purport of this errand with entire satisfaction, and felt so far interested in the success of the same, that he told him he would saddle his own horse in the morning and accompany him to the place where Robin and his men were then abiding. Nothing could be more fortunate. Patrington was so glad that he scarcely knew how to wait till morning. He drank however freely of the liquor which the host, proud of his loyalty, had great pleasure in serving, especially as the page spoke highly in its praise.

“This gentleman’s business will put a feather in my nest,” thought the landlord, “perhaps the queen herself will be coming after this.”

Thus the evening passed on, and Patrington retired to dream away the fumes of the wine.

Early the next morning the yeoman who had so kindly offered his services arrived. It is a pity the

ballad-makers have not preserved the name of this kind veoman. Patrington and he set out together to find our hero. This they did without any difficulty whatever, and the page delivered his message in that simple business-like manner which practice invariably gives.

Robin with his experienced eye saw at a glance that there was no treachery on foot, and consequently from his chivalrous turn of mind felt at once gratified with the application, and eager to comply with the terms of the same.

“The commands of the queen,” said Patrington, “are, that you at once repair to the court at London. The queen has moreover sent you a ring in token of her good faith.”

Robin immediately took off his rich mantle of green, and sent it by this dutiful page as a present to her majesty, intimating that he would do himself the honour of presenting himself as soon as possible in the train of her majesty, or to be more precise her grace, the former being a term of more modern use. In accordance therefore with this message, Robin made preparations for his journey. He clad his men all in their favourite costume, Lincoln green, and arrayed himself in bright military scarlet, all having on black hats adorned with a white feather, appendages these in respect to royalty.

When he arrived at the court in London, he presented himself to the queen, falling down on his knee in a becoming manner.

“Thou art welcome,” said the queen, “welcome at this court with all thy yeomanry.”

The king having gone to Finsbury field with his chosen archers, Robin resolved to follow accompanied with some of his picked men, whom he had brought along with him. When they arrived, the king gave instructions to have the distance measured off in a satisfactory manner. The distance agreed on was fifteen score yards ; a distance as the ballad intimates which none but rare archers could reach.

“What is the prize ?” said the queen, “now to be contended for.”

“A princely wager,” replied the king, “a princely wager such as befits a monarch to bestow : namely, three hundred tuns of Rhenish wine, three hundred tuns of beer, together with three hundred of the best harts that run on Dallom Lea.”

The distance being thus fixed the archers of the king showed themselves, and were about to shoot although no competitors had thus far made their appearance.

Here the archers stood, says the ballad, three and none.

Which we take to imply, that the three selected by the king had hitherto none to oppose them.

The ladies of the court took the alarm, seeing how matters stood, and called upon the queen to say that her game was going to be lost.

Moved by this appeal, the queen desired the favour of a short time for preparation, and earnestly wished to know if no one present would be of her party, particularly challenging the knight Sir Richard Lee, as one sprung from noble blood.

“Come hither to me likewise,” said the queen to the bishop of Hereford, who seeing Robin and his party around the queen, looked shyly on, and said :—

“The king’s archers are all men whom we know ; but as for these strangers we give them no confidence.”

Robin and his men although present had not thus far made known their object.

Here however Robin recognising his old friend, the bishop, asked what he would bet in favour of the applauded archers of the king, against himself and two others of his companions.

“I will bet fifteen score nobles,” said the bishop, “the whole of the money my purse contains.”

“The wager is accepted,” said Robin, throwing down on the ground, by the side of the bishop’s money, a bag of gold.

Scadlock looked on with pleasure, as soon as he saw the bishop’s money staked against that of his master, for said he :—

“I ween whose this will be ere long.”

Affairs being now somewhat better adjusted, the king’s archers took the lead, and when it came to Robin and his mates, the ladies cheered most joyously in hopes that the queen’s party would win.

“We are three and three now,” said the king, “but the last three I trow pay for all.”

Robin however nothing disheartened by the shooting he had witnessed, stepped up to the queen before he shot and whispered ‘the king’s chance is a small one.’ Robin then pulled the bow-string and away sped the

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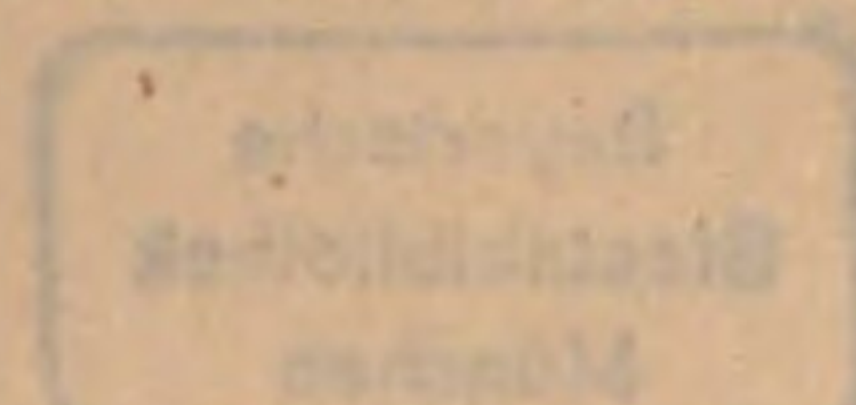
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mysterious arrow into the centre of the mark. Clifton followed and with equal precision his arrow clove the willow wand. Next came Midge the miller's son, whose arrow was the length of a finger from the focal point. Such shooting, the gentlemen and ladies of the court had never witnessed, and now, after the breathless silence that had reigned whilst the arrows had been delivered, there arose a long burst of hurrahing and clapping of hands, in which the ladies indulged with the greatest enthusiasm, waving their handkerchiefs and congratulating the queen on the success of their party. The queen now flushed with joy that gave additional grace to her charms, hastened to the king, and requested a favour, namely, that he would not on any account be angry with any person that belonged to her party.

“I will not,” replied the monarch, “at least they shall have an indulgence of forty days to come and go as they list, whatever displeasure their present opposition or previous conduct may have merited.”

“Heardest thou that,” said the queen to Robin, “doubly welcome art thou now, both thyself, Midge, and all thy company”

“Is this Robin Hood?” then said the king, “I understood he had been slain in the north country.”

The bishop of Hereford hearing the name of Robin Hood, turned round and exclaimed:—

“Robin Hood! I declare! had I known this before not a penny of my money would I have wagered against so celebrated a person, I know him of old. I remember once having to sing a mass to him and his followers

whilst bound fast to a tree. Yes I know Robin Hood."

Our hero could not avoid laughing to hear one of his antics published in the hearing of the king, but to put it off as much as possible in the shape of a good joke, he said to the bishop :—

"I think if I recollect I hardly paid you for singing that said mass, I will therefore return you half of the money I have this day won from you."

To this proposition, his secretary, Little John, would give no attention, but put it off by saying :—

"What gifts we make shall be to the servants of the king, but as for the bishop's gold it belongs to the company."

CHAPTER XXII.

ROBIN HOOD'S CHASE.

N the foregoing chapter the proceedings of a certain shooting match have been detailed at which Robin Hood and his men were conspicuous. The archers of the king were beaten by the matchless skill of our ever-practising outlaws, and although the queen was at the head of the party opposing that of the king, the latter does not appear to have taken the defeat kindly. At the special instance of the queen, he indeed gave the prize-winners the liberty of passing and re-passing about his court for the space of forty days, but at the end of that term or soon after, he felt a wish personally to lay hands on the outlaw, whose political offences had not been forgiven, nor even diminished by his success as an archer over those of the king's selecting, on the contrary it rather appears that they were thereby rendered more intolerable. At all events he was resolved to take him, and that if possible with his own hands.

In this state of mind he set out for Nottingham, and learnt on his arriving there, that Robin was in Sherwood forest, at no very great distance from that place.

The king was naturally glad to find his endeavour so nearly accomplished ; but he was about to catch a tartar.

If the king found friends willing to tell the whereabouts of the proscribed, Robin had friends on all sides ever hearty in his cause, and glad to communicate to him any intelligence in which his interests were concerned. This the king had yet to learn. Summoning additional force at Nottingham, the monarch proceeded into the forest, expecting shortly to have in his possession the archer who had so clearly won the prize over his chosen men, and the outlaw who had for years been the plague of bishops, and who had hitherto set at defiance all the means that had been tried to take him. Possibly the king humbled in the eyes of his followers and the ladies of the court by the affair at Finsbury, thought that by taking with his own hands the person thus obnoxious, he would silence all the clamour in favour of the outlaw and against himself. He found the forest it is true, and the place where Robin had lately abode, but the bird had flown, Robin was rather too old a fox to remain in the cover when the king's pack was peering into every bush. He had, as was said, many friends and from these he knew every measure attempted for his capture before there was time to put it into execution.

By the time the king had reached Sherwood forest, Robin Hood and his friends had just stepped over into Yorkshire, and the king following, had arrived at Wakefield in Yorkshire, to search from thence the woods of Barnsdale, Robin had walked over to the town of Newcastle. The king was a keen hunter and still pursued his game, he went forward in pursuit to New-

castle, but by this time Robin was at Berwick. After this Robin altered his tack, and crossed over to Carlisle and thence to the old city of Lancaster. He next visited Chester, and many places in that locality, and wherever he went his fame had preceeded him, and there he found friends. He knew however that the king had friends too, and did not on that account choose to remain long in a place. He was nevertheless under no apprehension that the king would be able to take him unless by treachery. In fact he saw, and the king himself began to see, that 'the longer the race the further behind' was the experience of this adventure.

Knowing that the king was north of Chester, and wishing once more to see the queen, in whose favour he knew himself to remain, he determined to take advantage of the king's absence and visit London. Directly south therefore he hastened, and paid his duty to the queen in London, who told him the king was out on an expedition, the object of which was to capture him. Robin thanked her for this communication, but assured her it was not needed, as he knew the intentions of the king but too well. After the king had reached Berwick, he seems to have given up the idea of taking the outlaw, and therefore sounded a retreat, and by easy marches returned to the metropolis. On his arrival at court, he was informed that Robin Hood had been enquiring for him, as in fact he had, and had told the gentlemen in waiting that he would endeavour to meet the king in Nottingham. The king was strangely surprised at this last intelligence. The thing appeared to him unaccountable.

“ Robin Hood been to London seeking me ! ” said he. “ Why have not I been all but hunting him down these last three weeks. I thought he was doing his utmost to avoid me, and he has actually being daring enough to come to my own court to enquire for me, at the very time I was using my poor foolish endeavours to catch him. That man’s a mystery, he has agencies at work in all parts of the kingdom, and so numerous that the wonder is that he contents himself with the spoils of a poor forest. Henceforward it shall be our gracious purpose to leave him alone.”

“ Let it be so, your grace,” said the queen.

“ It shall be so,” returned the king, “ I will hunt ~~no~~ more for Robin Hood.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

ROBIN HOOD, THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM,
AND THE KNIGHT.

 IN some of the former chapters in this volume, it will be remembered, we gave the details of certain benevolent actions done by our hero on behalf of a knight; how for instance he had enabled him to pay off a mortgage on his lands, and how he had forgiven him the money lent, with other particulars. Now the ballad whence this was taken, being of very ancient date, is divided into several parts termed 'fyttes,' and as it was our wish to make the reader acquainted with the manner in which our hero obtained his riches, and after that, how he selected his men before we proceeded with other matters, this ballad was discontinued at the point where the pecuniary affairs of the knight were so happily settled, namely at the end of the fourth fyte.

The intention for which this ballad was discontinued being now completed, we proceed with the same; the substance of which is as follows:

After the knight before-mentioned, whose name we here learn was Sir Richard of the Lee, had taken his leave of our merry woodsmen, they lived as the song has it, full many a day in their usual manner. The next striking circumstance here referred to being in connexion with the sheriff of Nottingham.

We profess not to determine whether the sheriff now under consideration was the same as the one whose kindness Little John became so well acquainted with, though from one expression in the ballad, there are reasons for thinking he was.

The office of the high sheriff at present is generally held by the same person only a year. How often it was changed in the time of our hero was a circumstance to the ballad-makers of no great moment, neither is it important in our present story.

The sheriff of Nottingham, be he who he may have been, originated a shooting match to take place at the town, and caused it to be announced to all who felt interested in such a contest, that he was prepared to bestow a splendid arrow to the winner whoever he might be. The arrow awarded as the prize was to have its shaft of silver, and the head and feathers of gold, beautiful in workmanship, and to be literally such as in England was none like it.

It was made known in the advertisement that fair play should be shown to all comers, and that he who shot the best, at "a payre of fynly buttes," should be declared the hero-archer of the day and bear away the prize.

This advertisement was a character too nearly allied to Robin's profession not to come under his notice. He heard the terms and resolved to attend.

"Brush yourselves up my men," said he, "I will go. I certainly do not like the proud sheriff: but at all events I will try his faith. I will ascertain whether

he has such a thing as truth and integrity in his composition. I will not however put myself in his power without preparation. My bold veomen seven-score in number shall be at no great distance, and then if the sheriff contemplates any mischief against me, he does it at his peril. There shall only six of you go with me to shoot at the match but the rest shall have with them their good bows bent, and be well furnished with arrows."

Thus prepared, our hero and company set forward to Nottingham, and found every thing arranged according to advertisement.

The sheriff was there, and many skilful and brave archers were there. The 'buttes' at which they were to shoot were 'fair and long,' and every thing betokened gentlemanly candour and fair play.

Robin stood boldly forward, when he arrived with his six chosen men, and when it was his turn to shoot, there was from the ease with which he handled his bow and delivered his arrow, attention paid him on every side. Perfect master of the practice he divided the wand without the least distinguishable error. He sent a second arrow, and the wand was slit a second time with equal precision. He shot again and again, the mark was pierced in a manner nothing could surpass.

After Robin Hood, Little John came forward, and showed himself a worthy disciple of his distinguished master. "He likewise divided the wand." In the same manner white-handed Gilbert, young Scathelock, little Much, or as he is often called Midge, and good Reynolde

shot their arrows in a style that would in the absence of their master, have found none to equal it out of the society of the green wood.

When the shooting was ended, there was no difficulty in deciding who was the winner. All admitted without any hesitation that Robin Hood was the chief of archers there assembled and the gold-headed silver arrow was at once handed to him by the sheriff, with every token of cordial congratulation and good faith. Robin accepted the present or prize in the most respectful manner, and as the business of the day seemed ended, he prepared to withdraw to his haunts in the green wood. All at once the attendants of the sheriff began to blow their horns, and Robin who all along had not been without his suspicions that this match might have been appointed for the purpose of alluring him from his retreat, called aloud the moment he heard the sound of the horns of the sheriffs men :

“ Treachery—treachery—on your guard bold yeomen—the sheriff is treacherous.”

“ Is this the manner thou promisedst to treat me when in yonder wild forest we parted beneath the try-string tree ? ” said Robin to the sheriff, whom he observed making preparations for attacking the outlaws, “ but proud sheriff, had I thee in my possession again under the shade of the green wood, thou shouldst leave me a better pledge of thy good faith than thy oath ere I would allow thee to depart, but even now since thou has proved thyself treacherous, take care or thy perfidy will be thy ruin.”

The difficulty however in which our hero was placed was not to be surmounted by words. The retainers of the sheriff backed by the strong arm of the law, began to gather round the followers of Robin, and he was under the necessity of giving orders to shoot, and they did shoot, and that with such effect, that notwithstanding the great preponderance in point of numbers on the side of the sheriff, his men could not maintain their ground against the resistless shower of arrows that the outlaws poured amongst them. There was however a serious drawback to this advantage. In the fight an arrow from one of the sheriff's men, pierced Little John in the knee so severely that he could not walk. A scene hence arose that speaks warmly for Robin's humanity, and likewise exhibits a determination to conquer or die, by which his men were actuated.

Little John finding himself after the conflict unable to proceed along with his companions, called to him his beloved master, and conjured him 'in the name of him who died on a tree,' not to allow him to fall into the hands of the sheriff alive ; but since he was unable to be of any service, and not even able to go along with them, to put an end to his existence with his own sword.

"Not for all the gold that wide England can boast, would I do such a thing to thee my valiant friend, neither shalt thou be left to fall into the hands of you treacherous coward," said the generous chief.

"No," said Little Much the miller's son, "that shall never be."

And to show the possibility of avoiding such a mishap took the same Little John on his back, and carried him nearly a mile, though in doing so he had frequently to lay him down to discharge arrows at the sheriff's party who it seems, although forced to retreat in the first instance, still found means to annoy the outlaws, the more so as one of them was wounded. On withdrawing from Nottingham after the conflict with the sheriff's men, Robin's party directed their steps to the woods, in the precincts of which stood a fair castle strongly fortified with walls and surrounded by double trenches. In this castle dwelt that gentleman whose necessities Robin had relieved with a loan, afterwards converted into a gift of four hundred pounds. It is not surprising therefore that Robin harassed now by hostile followers, and anxious respecting the misfortune of Little John, proceeded thither to see if he might calculate on any succour from his old friend.

The knight received him and all his company with that courtesy and graciousness of manner, which belong alone to a noble and generous nature.

"Welcome art thou," said he, "my friend Robin, and welcome are thy bold yeomen, and doubly welcome art thou Little John now in thy misfortunes, who once so cheerfully wast my companion to York, on an errand the cause of which I shall never forget, since but for that journey I had not possessed now this secure home to which I welcome thee. No men in the world have so great a right, and certainly none could be more welcome to share this fortress, and the security it affords,

than the company of the green wood. The sheriff of Nottingham I am aware will not like it ; but gratitude demands a sacrifice, and I will gladly incur the consequences of his displeasure and malice, rather than be found wanting to my friends in time of need."

He then gave orders for the castle gates to be shut, the bridge to be drawn and the walls of the fortress to be armed.

"For," added he to Robin, "it is well to be prepared and whether we are attacked in this place or not, I swear to thee by St. Quintin, that thou shalt not depart for twelve days to come, which we will devote to the interests of friendship, good feeling and mutual friendship."

The tables were then ordered to be laid, and the cloths spread, and the guests sat down to a good dinner served up in the style of good old English hospitality, with which substantial meal this part of the ballad closes as before intimated.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ROBIN HOOD, THE KING, THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM,
AND THE KNIGHT.

 HE retreat in the castle of the knight proved the safety of Robin and his men. We are not furnished with the details of their stay, any more than of their departure. It appears however that Little John remained longer than the rest, in fact till the wound in his knee was perfectly well, when he again joined his companions.

The protection granted by the knight, and its consequences to him are the special points of interest dwelt on in this portion of the ballad termed ‘the syxte fyte.’

Finding the out-lawed party secure in the castle, the sheriff upbraided the knight with being a traitor to the king, and harbouring his enemies. He likewise tried to rouse the neighbourhood to make war against him, and besiege him in his own castle ; but in this he was not successful ; as the knight had not outraged the sympathies of the common people by protecting the outlaw, but rather gained their favour. The answer given to the sheriff by the knight was firm and dignified.

“ I am fully aware of what I have done and will disavow nothing. I have not in any point acted contrary

to the duty of a true knight, and as regards the thing of which thou complainest, that is not a question belonging to thy jurisdiction. If I have transgressed, I am amenable only to the king, and till his will is known look to thyself and go about thy business."

The sheriff at this rebuke felt himself further humbled, and resolved to apply to the king for assistance and power to act. To London therefore he hastened, and laid the matter before him in such a manner as to make the case appear very unfavourable to Robin, and still more so to the knight, as he told him how in opposition to his lawful constitutional power as a sheriff, the said knight had opened the gates of his castle to the outlaws and given them protection and shelter in the face of the whole country, and likewise how he had refused to yield to his jurisdiction.

Chagrined with these complaints the king told the sheriff he would himself be at Nottingham in less than a fortnight, and would inflict on the same Robin Hood and that undutiful knight punishments such as their flagrant irregularities demanded.

"Hie thee away then," said he, "thou supercilious sheriff, to thy home and collect together against my arrival as many good archers as can be found in the north."

The sheriff obeyed his sovereign, and on his return found that Robin was again at large in the wide green wood, and that Little John, recovered of his wound, had joined his master. This gave him great uneasiness; his plot for securing the outlaw had not only failed

but the popularity of Robin was vastly increasing by the very means intended as his ruin. He had borne away the golden-headed arrow, the prize for the most distinguished archer. He had defeated or illuded his own retainers, and found sympathy and protection in an ancient castle, and now he was as secure as ever in the forest, too well-informed to be again cajoled by the rumour of a shooting match, to leave his fortresses. As for the knight, here was a case better to manage. He was, although popular, no outlaw, but to be met with when occasion required, besides he had the countenance of the king, and was in a condition to seize him when opportunity should place him in his power.

There is nothing like a little private malice for giving full weight and measure to the efficiency of a public functionary.

Stimulated by this motive, he spared no pains to catch the unfortunate object of his revenge, and finding that he was in the habit of walking by the river side, and amusing himself with his hawks, the proud sheriff determined to lay wait for him, with a small band of men, and thus take him into custody. His plans were successful. Not suspecting any evil of this sort, the knight went out as usual a-hawking, and while thus engaged was surprised by the sheriff and his men, bound hand and foot and taken as a prisoner to Nottingham; the sheriff half mad with success swearing a great oath that if he only was as sure of Robin Hood as he was of the knight, he could go to bed and sleep comfortably.

His boasting was however premature. The knight's

lady knowing either from actual observation, or from trust-worthy authority, of all that had befallen her spouse, was for a while in sad distress, but calling to mind the character of Robin Hood, his known heroism, the large force of yeoman-archers under his command, as also the attachment that had long existed, and recently being renewed, between her husband and him, she resolved to go herself in search of him, to tell him of the proceedings of the sheriff, and thus to throw herself upon his chivalric and high-minded generosity, as the only means of effecting the release of her absent ill used husband.

When a virtuous and affectionate lady resolves to do any thing for the benefit of one she loves, she is seldom long about it. No sooner had the lady in question taken her resolution, than she hurried away into the secret recesses of the forest, and guided by the good genius of the woods, soon found herself in the presence of the outlaw and his companions.

She was immediately recognised and treated with all the courtesy that a virtuous lady could expect. Having obtained an audience of Robin, she detailed to him all that she knew respecting the capture of her husband, and in piteous terms entreated him to attempt a rescue.

“It shall be done, fair lady, it shall be done,” replied Robin, in a tone of voice and manner that made the stoutest of his followers quail before him, while they heard his voice and beheld the glare of his restless flaming eyes. “It shall be done, my lady, you

may retire with composure to your castle, the knight, your consort, will soon be at home."

It was enough. Real earnestness is always eloquent and never fails to produce conviction. The lady retired as well assured that all would soon be right as if her spouse had been at that very moment standing by her side,

Robin Hood had spoken, he now began to act.

"Brush yourselves up my men," said he, "all to arms, we are going to Nottingham."

No despot was ever so cheerfully obeyed as Robin Hood. He had but to make known his commands or wishes and they were instantly executed. His men were immediately equipped, and on the road with their master in the direction of Nottingham. The sheriff had never contemplated a move like this. They found him quite unprepared, congratulating himself on his successful enterprise against the knight. When Robin entered his presence, in doing which he found no difficulty, he asked him what tidings he had for him from the king referring to the sheriff's late visit of which he was well informed, for continued Robin—

"I hear thou hast tidings from the king, and to tell thee the truth, I have this day trudged on foot faster than I have done for this last seven years, a toil of activity that is not for thy good."

Having said this, apparently with no very decided object in view therefrom, he applied an arrow to the string of his bow and sent it into the sheriff's body, and before he had a chance of trying whether the arrow had

inflicted a fatal wound, he cut off his head from his body with his sword: a deed which Robin rarely did.

“Lie there” said he, “thou proud sheriff, thou foe to that which is good. What man living would long be able to trust his own brother, if such as thou hast been are to be suffered to live.”

He then commanded his followers to serve all the sheriff's men in the same manner that offered any resistance. There were however few who sought for vengeance on behalf of a master, whose services were valued only on account of the money they produced, and Robin made his way into the dungeon in which was placed his valued friend the knight, whose bonds he immediately loosed, and told to follow by his side, at the same time putting a bow into his hand.

The knight's interview with his wife after his release is not recorded, there are pleasures too delicate and sacred to be related, and doubtless the ballad-makers of the times thought this interview of that class, and have therefore left it to the imagination of the reader to supply, a pleasure of which it is not our place to deprive them.

This division of the ballad ends by Robin's inviting the released knight to join him in the woods till the king's arrival, when a full and free pardon would no doubt be granted for any imagined evil it might be thought he had done.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE KING.

BEING THE DIVISION OF AN ANCIENT BALLAD TERMED
"THE SEVENTH FYTTE."

CONFORMABLY to the promise made to the sheriff lately slain, the king came to Nottingham accompanied with knights and a splendid train of courtiers, with the avowed intention of taking Robin Hood and the offending knight, Sir Richard of the Lee.

Having arrived he made all possible enquiry respecting the where-abouts of Robin and the knight, but with no success whatever. The latter had left his castle, and was supposed to be in the company of the outlaw, and Robin who was well acquainted with all the king's proceedings took care to be not easy to find. All that he could do thus far was to take possession of the lands of the knight, which he accordingly did. In passing through the forest he was much annoyed to find many places that formerly abounded with deer to have on this occasion scarcely any. Among other places, one named Plompton park, frequented much by Robin Hood, was particularly complained off, and in complaining the king wished in the name of the Trinity, he could

set his eyes on that plundering outlaw. He likewise declared, that if any one could be found, who would bring him the head of the disgraced knight, he would give to him and his heirs for ever the lands belonging to the offender.

In reply to this announcement, one of the knights in his retinue who had courage and honesty enough to speak the truth even in the ears of royalty, plainly told the king that the present to which he referred would be a most dangerous one to the receiver, as he assuredly would have to pay for it with the loss of his head, since Robin and the company were devotedly attached to the interests of the said offender, and would not suffer any man to live in possession of estates confiscated from an owner who was a friend of theirs. At any rate, said the adviser, give these lands to no one to whom you wish any good, for evil will assuredly befall him.

The king remained in the neighbourhood of Nottingham for the space of half a year, without doing anything effectually toward the capture of the proscribed parties. Indeed the ballad assures us, that all this time Robin pursued his accustomed calling, and feasted on the king's deer with as good a relish as ever.

At length a forester in the king's service, professedly at least, went up to the king and said—

“If my liege really wishes to see Robin Hood, and will vouchsafe to take the advice of an humble forester, I will engage to take him into his presence in a short time, but it cannot be with numerous forces, Robin will if possible avoid a collision with the king. The way to

see him will be to select to yourself five of your best knights, and to walk down by yonder abbey in the weeds of a monk. I will be your conductor, and I am sure by means so unassuming you will not be long before you see the person whom you are so desirous of meeting. At all events so satisfied am I of what I say that I will risk my head on its success."

The idea met with the king's approval, and he appointed five of his knights to accompany him on this expedition. Monk's weeds for the whole party were speedily found, and under the guidance of this forester, the king set out arrayed as a monk, having on a cowl, stiff boots, and other appendages suitable to the dress of an abbot. On their way to the green wood the king proceeded on horseback singing. About a mile behind the party we are told some little equipage followed consisting of post and sumpter horses. They had not been long in the forest however, before they were stopped by Robin, who no doubt was privy to all as it passed.

On seeing the party of would-be-travelling monks, Robin laid hold of the horse on which the king was mounted and said to its rider :—

"Sir abbot by your leave you must abide here awhile. You must know that we are foresters, that have nothing on which to live but the king's deer, while you have rich churches and plenty of gold. Give us therefore, sir abbot, of your charity something to spend, and stay and refresh yourselves a little with rest and good cheer, and so will you depart the better for our having met."

Then spake the disguised monarch, or as he is termed through the whole of this ballad the “comely kynge Edward,” and said :—

“I have no money with me except forty pounds to give thee, but if I had a hundred, since thou and thy fellows are in such need I would give thee the whole. To what I have, however, thou art welcome ;” handing him at the same time the money.

Robin took the forty pounds, and dividing it into two equal portions, gave one half to his men and told them to be merry ; the other half he offered to the king, saying :—

“Sir abbot I wish you to keep this for your own spending, we shall probably meet some other day.”

“Thank thee,” said the abbot, “and know that I have been with the king at Nottingham an entire fortnight, and he gave me a commission to greet thee well on his behalf, and to convince thee of his good faith he hath sent thee this his own seal,” at the same time putting a seal into Robin’s hand.

On hearing this Robin conducted himself in his most courteous and gentlemanly manner, and said :—

“I love no man in the world more than I love my king. I feel myself highly honoured by this mark of my sovereign’s regard, and shall keep this seal as a thing of inestimable value ; and as for thyself sir abbot, I am hereby laid under lasting obligations to thee for bringing to me this token and tidings of so flattering a nature. I have no means at command to convince thee

of my gratitude further than by asking thee to dine with me to day, a favour which I trust thou wilt do me the honour of accepting beneath this trysting tree."

To give the king, who imagined his rank and station were still unknown to Robin, an opportunity of judging of his importance and power, our outlaw after this blew his horn and forthwith appeared in their best costume seven score bold yeoman standing all in a row to receive instructions from their master. This sight struck the king forcibly, and pleased him well. He remarked emphatically, or rather he swore by St. Austin, that the outlaw's men were more obedient to him than his attendants were to him, an expression that scarcely became his assumed position as a disguised monk.

Fat venison was soon served smoking hot before their guest and his suite, along with fine white bread, good red wine, and fine brown old ale, together with such other comforts as circumstances would permit, to the surprise and satisfaction of the royal visitor.

When dinner was over, which was conducted in a style of behaviour by Robin's men such as became the dignity of their unwonted and unbidden guest, Robin said to his visitor, "thou shalt now see what kind of a life we lead, that when thou art again in the presence of the king thou mayst inform him of what thou hast seen." Then giving a signal to his men, he bid them rise and stand to arms.

In an instant all were in a row with their bows bent in their hands and their arrows applied to the strings in a most menacing and bristling attitude. The effect

was so sudden and unexpected that the king was seized with terror and felt himself for a moment only a man.

Robin however soon reassured him by informing him he was going to have a little bow-practice for his special entertainment. Marks or as they were termed 'buttes' were fixed up at a distance which the king declared to be too long, at which Robin and his men were about to shoot. A kind of garland made of roses was constructed and fitted on the object at which they were to shoot, and every one that failed to lodge his arrow within the garland, should surrender it to Robin, and receive as a token of failure a blow on his head, a very old-fashioned way this of finding fault.

The practice then began in a style peculiar to our outlaws, but the test was so narrow that several failed at one turn or other to be within it, that is the garland. These Robin struck smartly, or as the ballad has it, 'he struck them wonder sare,' which caused a good deal of merriment.

Robin himself now took his bow and sent the arrows number one and two into the centre of the garland, the third arrow either from a mishap or to cause a little extra merriment was more than three fingers from the garland. "A miss! a miss!" rung aloud a score merry voices.

"A miss!" cried Gilbert with the white hand, "stand forth master to receive your pay, your arrow is forfeited; stand forward and receive your pay."

"Since such is my misfortune," said Robin, who never enjoyed any special immunities during their

sports, "I deliver mine arrow to thee, sir abbot, and request thee to serve me out as I have done similar failures."

"Mine order," replied the king, still retaining his assumed character, "scarcely allows me to smite a yeoman, not even although as at present I have leave to do so. I would not willingly grieve any one."

"Smite me boldly," said Robin, "I freely give thee leave to do it."

Thus urged and rather liking the joke, the king doubled up his long sleeves and gave Robin such a tremendous buffet that he nearly fell to the ground.

"I declare before God," said Robin, "thou art a stalwort brother, and believe me there is pith in that arm of thine, and I doubt not that thou wouldst make an excellent archer."

The king flattered by the compliments he just received was more open in his manner, and Sir Richard of the Lee and Robin himself, perhaps by mutual concert, both immediately at the same time recognized him as the king and knelt before him, as likewise did the whole body of archers.

This the king considered homage of the most genuine kind, and feeling himself moved acutely by the sight of so many bold bowmen whose threatening attitude a little before had inspired him with fear, now on their knees as suppliants he assumed his most gentle and gracious manner.

Robin alone spoke, and it was in a calm dignified manner, to ask pardon for himself and all his company

for any offences with which they might be chargeable.

“In the name of God,” then replied the king, “I grant thy petition. I give you all here a free pardon, with the hope that henceforth thou Robin wilt leave this green wood and come and live with me at my court in London.”

“I will do according to your pleasure,” replied Robin, “I will enter your grace’s service, and if I like it will remain, but if not I will return again to this place and shoot at the dun deer as I have done for many a long and happy day.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE KING—CONTINUED.

BEING THE LAST DIVISION OF THE ANCIENT BALLAD TERMED
“THE EIGHTH FYTTE.”

THE king having made himself known to the outlaws and pardoned them, took a fancy from the splendid figures Robin’s men cut in the forest to have dresses similar to theirs for himself and a few chosen attendants.

He applied therefore to Robin for an outfit, and was supplied by the outlaw with a large quantity. The price Robin charged is not given, but it is plainly intimated that the cloth was sold, not given. When the

king therefore got his green livery ready for himself and attendants he immediately put it on, and thus clad and proud of the distinction it conferred, gave orders for the whole assembled force to proceed to Nottingham, and very grand the king thought they appeared arrayed in their new bright Lincoln green.

On their way the party kept amusing themselves with shooting at any thing that took their fancy, more for practice and pastime than any thing else. The king himself rode by the side of Robin, and they too tried to beat each other in aiming at objects agreed on, and dealt a blow or buffet in turns to the one that failed.

It is to be hoped that Robin allowed the king to beat sometimes, as it would not have been courteous to be continually inflicting chastisement on a king, though we are told that Robin did not forget to bestow the reward whenever it was due. When they reached Nottingham the people stood and gazed at them with astonishment, to see the fields covered with persons all in the livery of the outlaw. The more wealthy inhabitants were in great consternation, as they inferred from the force in which Robin's party had mustered, that the king had been slain in the expedition.

"He will sack the city," said some of them, and to avoid such a result, many we are told both yeomen and knaves, and even old women that hardly knew they were able to walk, found nimble feet to leave the town.

The king made himself merry at their alarm, although he made himself known in order to restore their

confidence and to keep them in the town.

When order and confidence had been effected a feast was prepared and much rejoicing was the consequence, though as was most natural, many of the assembled knights and friends of the king were puzzled with the turn affairs had taken.

“Why,” said they, “the king set out to take Robin Hood with a view to bring him to justice for stealing his deer, and now he has returned with him as with a distinguished friend and given him a splendid entertainment, having even assumed the livery of the offender.”

When dinner was over, Sir Richard of the Lee was called forth, and the king in the presence of the assembled crowd made it known that he had granted a full pardon to the outlaws and the knight, and that to the latter he had restored his lands and all privileges there to belonging.

Robin as spokesman for the knight and his companions, dropped on his knee and thanked the king cordially for this indulgent manifestation of his kingly prerogative, and here the Nottingham party is abruptly broken up, at least nothing more is said of it in the ancient ballad.

We learn however that Robin went with the king to London attached to his court or establishment, and in that situation reference is next made to him in terms bearing the following interpretation.

After Robin had lived in the household of the king for a term of fifteen months, he found he was daily

getting poorer, that he had already spent a hundred pounds or more. It was no wonder. The disposition of Robin was naturally liberal and even lavish. Generosity in him, notwithstanding predatory practices, might be said to be his failing. Accordingly whenever he went in London he acted as a gentleman, never refusing to hand out his cash where a reckoning had to be settled, and this not only for persons in a mercenary condition, but likewise for knights and squires, so that he found the city and the services of the king no good as regarded his coffers.

When this term was over, all the men belonging to Robin had left the precincts of the court to pursue their old habits except Little John and Scathelocke, his two special and constant friends. One day while residing at the court he happened to see as he was out in the country, a number of young men practising with the bow, when his love for that sport operated powerfully on his feelings, and he languished to live as he had formerly done in the pleasant green wood.

“Ah,” said he, looking at them, “I have seen the time when that game at which you are playing was my constant pastime. I was happy then. No man in England could then draw a bow successfully against me, and now what am I? I am in the service of the king it is true: and he is kind and gracious; but my pleasures are insipid, my employments dull and tame; besides, I have spent all my money, although living with the king. I have grown worse and worse. I will away to my old friends in the north, Barnsdale and the merry

Sherwood, for if I remain much longer here I shall die a sad sorrowful death. I am in fact half dead already."

Penetrated therefore with these home-sick reflections he went to the king and pretended that under religious obligations he would be obliged to visit Barnsdale, where he had formerly built a chapel dedicated to Mary Magdalene, which it was necessary for him to see. I hope, therefore, your grace will make no objections to this my request. During the last seven nights, urged Robin, I have been wakeful on account of this duty, and have neither eaten nor drunk as usual. I must return and do penance, the duty I owe to religion demands me to make this sacrifice.

On hearing this story the king consented to his absence for a short term, and Robin accordingly took his leave of the court with a determination secret but firm that he would never dwell there again so long as deer could be slain in the free wild woods. No mention is made of his two companions named above, but that perhaps the ballad-makers thought unnecessary as they were part and parcel of himself, and would consequently accompany him.

When he reached the precincts of his former loved haunts after more than a twelvemonth's absence, the soul of our hero almost melted within him at the recollections they forcibly suggested. It was on a fine morning in spring when the sun shone beautifully bright on the fresh green leaves of the groves just bursting into loveliness. The birds among the branches of the trees, warmed into love and song by the beauty of the

season, with tunefully sweet voices as if in simultaneous concert seemed to welcome him back.

“Ah!” said Robin, as emotions of rekindling attachment glowed in his bosom, “how could I remain so long away from a home like this? What was there in the presence of a king surrounded by his flattering minions to compare to the breath of these gales, balmy, delicious whispers of untold fragrance. Here will I remain, ye blissful shades. Never again shall Robin Hood the free-born child of the forest be decoyed even by a king, to sacrifice the delights of scenery like this for aught on earth that a monarch has to bestow. So farewell courts, and welcome green wood. And now for my dinner.”

After Robin had thus soliloquised on the borders of the forest, he took his bow and somewhat timidly, being out of practice, made towards a herd of deer which he saw at a short distance.

“Let us try,” said he, “whether Robin Hood can kill a deer,” at the same time discharging an arrow at a full-grown hart. The creature fell lifeless to the ground.

“I will see,” said he, “now if my horn is yet respected,” as he stood over the body of the slain animal. He then blew a loud blast—he blew again a still louder blast, and the woods caught and re-echoed the sound for miles.

The outlaws in the neighbourhood who happened to hear it, were at a loss what to make of it. “If that horn,” said Gilbert with the white hand, “is not blown

by our master I will never answer his summons again.’

“It was Robin’s own blast,” said another, “I know by its thrilling tone, he has returned, I said he would never settle in London and so said and thought many.” There was no mistaking its peculiar cadence, the very woods themselves seemed to recognise and repeat in their long sounding echoes the well known summons with a marked distinctness.

Convinced therefore as all the outlaws were who heard it, Robin soon found himself in the midst of a congratulatory band of old familiar faces beaming with sentiments of duty, pleasure, and love, to see again their valued chief in the midst of his own domains.

“The forest looks like itself again,” said they, “All will be well now.” And never did the woods echo more hearty mirth, than on the evening of the day which placed that determined outlaw at the head of his devoted followers.

For twenty-two years after this event the ballad asserts, bold Robin lived in the green wood. It likewise makes mention in a manner not very explicit of the particulars attending his death, namely that a relation of his, a female, the prioress of “Kirklesley,” beguiled him in order to please a wicked knight named Sir Roger of Doncaster, to visit her priory in order to be bled, as a means of restoration from an illness under which he then laboured.

Not suspecting any thing but kind treatment and fair play from his own relative, Robin complied with her invitation, and told his men he was going to visit the said

prioress with a view to having a little blood taken from him to improve his health. He departed but never returned. The lady bled him to death at the instigation of the said knight. As however the particulars of his death are recorded more fully in another ballad we will here add no more. The last verse in this very ancient ballad ends by praying as good catholics, and why not protestants? are accustomed to pray, that Christ who died on a tree would have mercy on his soul, for he was it asserts, a good outlaw and did much good to the poor.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE POTTER.

THIS ballad one of the most ancient and difficult to decypher on account of its orthography, obsolete and peculiar idiom, of any we have examined, commences by complimenting Robin Hood on account of his gallantry and general courtesy as a yeoman. It then proceeds to say “as he stood one day among his merry men, he observed at no great distance a proud potter conveying with a horse and cart his wares to the market.”

“Yonder comes a proud potter,” said Robin, “he has long travelled on this road and has never yet paid

toll, and as I feel almost mouldy for want of something to do, I will just go and demand my dues."

"Thou art better where thou art," said Little John, "I happen to know something about yon potter. He is a rough customer, I once met him at Wentbridge, and had a bout with him at quarter staff, and to tell you the truth I was nothing in his hands. I only got three blows from him I admit but they were quite sufficient, my sides remembered them for months afterwards."

This declaration only whetted Robin's appetite. He was then determined, happen what might, to levy toll on the traveller.

"It is no use," said Little John, "I will lay forty shillings there is not a man among us that can make him part with a copper."

"I accept your wager," returned Robin, putting forty shillings into the hands of a fellow yeoman, to an equal sum so deposited by Little John, and making towards the potter the moment he had done so.

Robin had no sooner overtaken the potter than he laid hold of the reins of the horse and stopped him.

"What is thy will with me?" said the potter.

"My name is Robin Hood," said the other, "I collect toll of persons passing through this forest, and as thou hast never yet paid me any I have just come to demand it of thee."

"That thou art Robin Hood I have no doubt, and that thou collectest toll of travellers I have heard several times, both in the forest and elsewhere; but I

would have thee understand that I am not a toll payer, at least not one such as thou wilt admire. I tell thee plainly friend thou wilt get no toll from me. I generally settle all demands of this sort with a good stiff oak staff which I carry with me. And if thou really persistest in thy claims I will satisfy them in a very few minutes."

"Whatever thy staff may do, I profess not to determine," said Robin, "but cleverly as thy tongue has done its part, the toll I demand of thee will not be paid by thy tongue."

"Then it shall with my staff, proud fool," said the potter, "thou shalt have the coin thou demandest," springing out of the cart as he spoke with his staff in his hand.

Robin drew his sword and they met each other in a fighting attitude, while Little John and his fellows remained under a tree at a distance surveying the proceedings. During the very first round the potter contrived with one of his awkward sturdy blows, to knock Robin's buckler out of his hands, so that he had not the protection so necessary against an antagonist armed with a ponderous staff, which he wielded with a force that caused two blows in a place to be quite superfluous.

After he lost his buckler the potter's blows told on the sides and shoulders of poor Robin with disastrous effect. He reeled and fell to the ground. Little John observing this called aloud to his companions, saying, "we must run to his succour, or the potter will kill him."

Instantly therefore, Robin's faithful companions were by the side of their master, and Little John seeing he was not seriously injured, said to him: "how now as to the wager? am I or you to win?"

"The potter's staff had settled that question before you came," answered Robin. "The potter has paid me his toll and I am satisfied."

"It is well thou art," returned the potter, "and I hope thou wilt learn to be more courteous in the future and not stop travellers on their way, which the proverb assures us is not good."

"I promise thee one thing," said Robin, "believe me if thou wilt, that if thou travellest through this forest a hundred times in a year, I will never exact toll from thee again."

"I may then put my good staff into the cart and proceed on my way again I suppose."

"As thou wilt, my friend," said Robin, now standing up, "but I should be more happy to receive thee into the fellowship of this company of good yeomen."

"I should be nothing loath," replied the potter, "but here are my horse and cart and a load of pottery wares."

"Give them to me," said Robin, "and we will exchange clothes, and I will find a market for thy wares; and Little John here, thine old acquaintance at Wentbridge will introduce thee to the duties and pleasures of our society, while I dispose of the pots. These suggestions were at once agreed to. Robin put on the grey clothing of the potter, and the latter assumed the bril-

liant green costume of the outlaw, and thus for the present they parted. The potter with the company retiring into the forest, and Robin taking charge of the horse and cart-load of earthenwares.

Just as Robin had got into the cart, Little John ever anxious for the safety of his master and guessing he was going to Nottingham, cautioned him to be careful how he exposed himself to the eyes of the sheriff, "for thou knowest well," said he, "we have little to expect from his friendship."

"Leave that to me and our lady," said Robin, "as I doubt not through her kind assistance I shall be able to do business as a potter in a manner satisfactory to us all."

When Robin came to Nottingham, the first thing he did was to put up his horse, and it is gratifying to learn that the practice of feeding horses with oats and hay now so general, existed at the time of the Edwards and Henrys. We give our readers the verse mentioning the fact, for the double purpose of showing our authority and furnishing a specimen of the language and style in which this and many others of these ancient ballads are written.

"When Robyn cam to Notynggam,
The soyt yef y scholde saye,
He set op hes horse anon,
And gaffe hem hotys and haye."

Having like a humane man tended his horse, he proceeded to expose his wares for sale, which he did in the midst of the town. It would be a strange business for Robin to stand by a collection of potterywares, and cry

out "Pots! Pots!" or as the old orthography has it, "Pottys, Pottys, come give me handsel for my Pots."

Robin seems not to have much minded the instructions of Little John, respecting avoiding the sheriff, on the contrary he exposed the pots opposite his gate, and cried aloud lustily. Wives and widows both we are told flocked round him and began to purchase, and no wonder for he sold them 'great chape' says the ballad, and made as much noise as any pot-dealer in the town. Robin, it will be remembered from his experience as a butcher knew how to get customers, namely by selling his articles at a low price. What was at a fair price worth five pence he offered for threepence. The old women gathered together in crowds and expressed their surprise at the wonderful cheapness of the goods thus on sale. They gave it as their opinion that the potter would soon be ruined; but none of them was kind enough to tell him so. They bought his pots, and would have done so in spite of the ruin they foresaw even if he had sold them at half the price he did. So much did the world of the fourteenth century resemble that in which we live. As the sheriff's lady had not appeared among the purchasers, Robin sent her five vessels of different sizes as a present which so pleased the good lady, that she went to him and told him that whenever he came that way again she would be a purchaser, and to convince him of the manner in which she regarded the courtesy of his gift, asked him to come and dine with the sheriff and herself. A good dinner was not often refused by the cheapener of earthenware,

and accordingly he went along with the sheriff's lady, while a maid-servant bore along the pots he had just presented.

After Robin had entered the hall he soon met the sheriff himself, and so complete was his disguise rendered by its connexion with his new calling, that he was not recognised as the outlaw against whom the anger of this public officer had waxed so hot. The sheriff's wife introduced Robin to her spouse as the person who had made them a handsome present, telling him that he was about to dine with them.

"He is right welcome," replied the other, "let us have dinner;" which was immediately served.

While they sat at meat two of the sheriff's men entered into conversation about a shooting match for a great wager which was shortly about to take place. In those days it would seem that rivalry in archery was much practised and encouraged. Robin hearing this and feeling how secure he was in his present disguise, and under the patronage of the sheriff resolved to attend. When the repast at the house of the sheriff, including good brown ale and wine, was ended, the men began to prepare butts to shoot at, and to furnish themselves with bows and arrows. Robin observed all these preparations with a relish which none but those accustomed to the sport could know, and waited till the wager was to be decided.

The sheriff's men we learn were no masters at the art, as their arrows without exception struck wide of the mark, none coming within the length of half a bow.

Robin concealed his contempt for such practice but could not help saying, that "he wished he had a bow and arrows as he thought he could shoot almost as well."

"Thou shalt have a bow," said the sheriff, "thou shalt try thy hand, thou seemest a strong-built stalwort man, thou shalt have one of the best bows that can be furnished," at the same time commanding one of his attendants to look to it that Robin was immediately supplied.

When Robin got hold of the bow he adjusted a string to it, and looked out some arrows from a quiver just at hand. Robin did not find his apparatus exactly to his mind. He knew there were better to be had in the merry green wood, but there was no alternative then, so he resolved to make the best of defective tools. The first arrow Robin discharged struck within a foot from the centre of the butt, which though inferior to his usual shooting, surpassed any that had preceded him. The sheriff's men tried again but without any better success, and were obliged to give up the palm entirely to the potter after he had delivered his second, which pierced the centre of the mark.

The marksmen of the sheriff felt themselves disgraced by the appearance and performance of a casual bystander; while their master applauded Robin in the neatest terms of commendation, telling him he was qualified to carry a bow go where he might.

"In my cart," said Robin, "I have a bow of the best quality I'll warrant it. The fact is I got it from Robin Hood."

“Robin Hood!” ejaculated the sheriff, “dost thou know him then?”

“I know him well.” replied the other.

“And so do I,” said the sheriff, “and would this moment give a hundred pounds to lay my hands on him.”

“I dare pledge my word,” said the potter, “that if thou wilt accompany me in the morning I can bring thee to him before dinner.”

“I will gladly,” replied the sheriff, and thus they returned to the house, where they found a good supper prepared for them by the sheriff’s lady, and where Robin remained all night.

On the following day, therefore, the sheriff set out with the potter towards the forest, professedly to take Robin Hood, whom the stalwort potter had engaged to find, and, finding, to capture before they had anything to eat. The sheriff’s wife seems to have found favour in the eyes of the disguised outlaw, as he took leave of her in a most friendly manner, and gave her a ring as a remembrancer. They set out in good spirits. The sheriff looked upon the potter not only as a person strongly attached to himself and his wife, but one whose muscular powers and skill in archery would be a sure guarantee against any mishap that might arise from the party against whom they were proceeding. When they came into the forest the potter intimated to the sheriff that they would soon drop upon the outlaw, and putting his horn to his mouth he blew a loud blast. The company of the green wood were at no great distance, and

as soon as Little John heard the well-known echo of Robin's horn he bounded forward as nimble as a deer at the head of his companions.

"Good morning master," said Little John, "I am happy to see you again, I hope you have succeeded in selling your pots."

"Never mind the pots," said Robin, "I have brought with me the sheriff of Nottingham to see you."

"He is heartily welcome," said the other.

"Why you see," continued Robin, "when I was at Nottingham yesterday the sheriff declared he would give a hundred pounds to see Robin Hood, and as I knew a hundred pounds would be useful in this shady retreat of ours, I told him I would undertake to introduce him to the person whom he was so anxious to see, of course he will pay the money as he can have no doubt that he is in the actual presence of Robin Hood."

"Had I known yesterday," said the sheriff interrupting the last speaker, "what I have foolishly learnt to day, thou shouldst not have returned into this forest for a thousand years."

"I knew that well," said Robin, "I knew it well, but thank God I am here, and for that very reason, namely thy wicked intentions towards me, thou shalt leave with us thy horse and all thy other personal possessions, not forgetting the hundred pounds which thou fairly owest me for the care I have taken of thee during the journey, and for bringing thee to have an interview with Robin Hood. Thou hast ridden here, but thou shalt trudge back on foot. I shall however for reasons

which I need not here explain, send to thy wife a milk-white palfrey which thou wilt have the goodness to conduct to her with the warmest assurances of my esteem for her goodness."

Having then according to custom lightened the traveller of all his unnecessary appendages, Robin put him into his way home, and thus left him to join his company.

When the sheriff got back to Nottingham, his wife came out to learn the success of his errand, saying "hast thou brought with thee that outlaw Robin Hood whom thou expectedst to capture."

"Robin Hood!" thundered out the sheriff in an exasperated tone, "he's a devil—damn him body and goods. Wouldst thou believe that the same civil-looking potter that was here yesterday, and that won at the shooting match, was none other than Robin Hood himself; and that after coaxing me into the forest, he called together his men with a horn he had with him, and they have robbed me of my horse and every thing I had, and out of spite to me I suppose he has sent thee this palfrey."

Vexed as the lady was to hear of her good man's misfortune, she could not avoid bursting out into a loud fit of laughter, at the manner in which it had been done.

"I wondered," said she, "how it could be that a strange unassuming potter should think of making me a present of his wares, but I find he has not forgot to make you pay for them."

In the four last stanzas of this ballad, we are again

with Robin in the forest, enjoying himself along with his bold yeomanry at the expense of the sheriff, when he enquired of the potter how much his pots might be worth, that he had taken with him to sell for him at Nottingham.

“If I had had the selling of them,” said the potter, ‘I could have got two nobles for them, but I fear you would not make so much.’”

“Have thy own opinion,” said Robin, “what I sold them for is my concern, I shall give thee not less than ten pounds, and I trust that whenever thou passest through this wood, thou wilt abide with us and receive a welcome to the freedom of the forest,”

Thus parted, continues the ballad, Robin Hood, the sheriff, and the potter, and may God have mercy on Robin Hood's soul and save all good yeomanry.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BEGGAR WITH A CLOUTED CLOAK.

ONE fine evening as Robin Hood was returning from his daily ramble and just about to enter the forest of Barnsdale, he met a beggar whose appearance struck him as being a step in advance of the class to which he belonged. It was usual, and possibly sound policy in those days, for beggars to wear garments in which was no lack of patches, but this new acquaintance of our hero carried the principle to an extreme.

Our readers however may judge for themselves, when they are told that the clouted cloak which he wore to keep him from the cold, was in its thinnest parts at least twenty patches thick. On his head he wore a covering made up of what had formerly been three hats, so that although a bundle of patches, he might be considered completely weather-proof. The ballad in fact intimates that he was so protected that go where he would through wind and wet, he was in a condition to defy the storm. He had likewise a meal-bag hanging about his neck fastened by a leather thong, or as the text terms it in intelligible Yorkshire 'a leather whang,' and this last was fastened to a broad buckle both 'stark and strang.'

This beggar as we said, struck Robin as one of no common stamp, and he was foolish enough to think that if any beggar was a rich man, the one before him was that man.

“Thou must stop my man,” said Robin, “thou must tarry a while here with me. I want to have a little discourse with thee.”

The beggar however took not the least notice of him, but pursued his way as if nothing had been said. At this Robin more importunate than before, stood forward and told him he must stop a little.

“By my faith,” said the vagrant, “I have no inclination to do so, I have a long way to go yet before I reach my lodging house, it is now growing late, I want my supper, and if I arrive there after it is over I shall look like a simpleton.”

“Thou art selfish,” said Robin, “and thinkest for nobody but thyself, I see clearly that if thou gettest thy supper in good time and all right, thou dost not care whether I get any at all or not. It is unbrotherly, friend, it wont do, I have had no dinner to day, and know not where to find my lodging. I might indeed go to the tavern but have not a coin to pay my expenses. Have the goodness to lend me a little money till we meet again.

The beggar answered him in a surly manner and told him he had no money to lend, that Robin was as young and able as himself, and in short that if he did not break his fast till he got money from him to enable him to do so, he would not break it for a twelvemonth

This style of arguing was not of a kind to induce our hero to desist; on the contrary he now told the vagrant plainly, that if he had a single farthing in his possession he would have it from him before he allowed him to proceed a step further.

“Lay down therefore,” said he, “thy clouted cloak, and undo the strings of thy bags, or I’ll rip them open without asking thy leave, and I further assure thee that if thou criest out for assistance, I’ll try an experiment and ascertain whether it be possible for one of these arrows to penetrate that swarthy skin of thine.”

This instead of discomfiting the beggar only caused him to curl his lip and smile at Robin, as he told him he was not the person to fear the effects of two or three bits of stick that possibly might be useful for stirring a pudding. “At all events,” said he, “I defy thee to do me any harm, and to tell thee the truth the less thou hast to do with me the better wilt thou fare.”

Thus coolly defied by a person whose position and means of defence seemed so inadequate, Robin waxed wroth and was on the point of adjusting an arrow to the string of his bow, when the vagrant with his traveling pikestaff stepped up nimbly to him, and before the arrow could leave the string, knocked both the bow and the arrow out of Robin’s hands, by which the former was broken. Our hero was now in an unenviable plight, he had lost his bow and his hand was so bruised with the blow by which that loss had been occasioned, that he could not use it to draw his sword. Robin had certainly begun the fray, and the beggar seemed to

think he had now a right to continue it. Among the many disasters that had befallen him, the outlaw never felt himself so completely cowed. His heart was sick within him, while the beggar kept relentlessly basting his sides with his tough heavy pikestaff, and he actually fell down in a swoon or fit of sickness. When Robin fell, the beggar still continued beating him and insulted him further by telling him not to go to sleep so soon, that he ought to keep awake till he got the money which he had just before threatened to do, that after so doing he might go to the tavern and buy good ale and wine, and laugh and crack with his companions, telling them how he was drinking at the expense of a beggar whom he had met in the dale, and for the sake of a bit of fun had robbed him, after giving him a sound drubbing. This was galling to the generous Robin, he lay in a half-conscious condition and said not a word. His cheeks became pale, says our authority, and his eyes were closed, and the beggar's resentment being appeased, he bundled up his rags and his pokes and thus left his victim lying on the ground.

It happened however, for good luck never entirely forsook him, that three of his men passed in that direction shortly after, and were dismayed and alarmed at the state in which they found their master. They took him up affectionately, but for a time he seemed to be in a trance; they perceived he had been severely beaten yet could they see no one of whom to enquire or on whom to throw the blame.

After a while Robin vomited a quantity of blood,

which evidently gave him relief, as he was then soon able to sit up and speak to his comrades.

As might be expected his men were very anxious to learn the cause of his disaster, which anxiety Robin relieved as soon as he had recovered strength and breath, by saying, "I have been a watchman in this wood for more than twenty years, yet was I never so belaboured as I have been this day, by, I shame to think of it, a beggar wearing a clouted cloak of whom I feared no mischief, but he has beaten me with his pikestaff so roughly that I fear I shall never be well again as long as I live."

His companions hearing this eagerly cried out all together, "where is he? where is he?" intent on taking speedy revenge.

"He is ambling along," said Robin, "up yonder hill with his heavy hat on his head, and if ever you had any love for your master, I hope you will now show it by avenging this insult and injury he has just received. If it be possible bring him back to me that I may see him punished before I die. If however you cannot succeed in bringing him back, at all events take care that he goes no further, for it would be a disgrace such as has never befallen us, were a boasting mendicant to go tramping through the country and telling how he had beat the sides of bold Robin till they were actually raw."

"Never fear us master," said his companions, "we will make it all right shortly. One of us shall remain here with you while the other two go and fetch the

villain to atone for his brutality, and learn that the company of the green wood is to be respected."

"You have said plenty," said Robin, "you must now act, for I am not so sure that you will find it an easy task to get him back. That pikestaff of his is a terrible weapon, and so long as he retains that in his possession he will deal blows fast enough for you both or I am mistaken."

"Leave that to us, good master, never fear that two men in our band are to be defeated by a beggar wearing a clouted cloak. We'll bring him back you may rest assured. You shall see him again, and he shall see what he has done, and be taught manners that will be of no use to him, as it is our firm intention before the daylight closes to hang him on a tree."

"I wish you may be right," said their master, "but take care to secure the pikestaff before he be aware of you. Pounce upon it from some ambush, for unless you can do that, I fear you have only a small chance."

The two men would delay no longer, but set off at full speed in pursuit of the vagrant, against whom they were so justly incensed.

The beggar was two miles in advance of them, and kept trudging on neither more rapidly nor slowly than he did before he met the outlaw. The men, however, knowing the forest well, took a different and much shorter road than the one the vagrant travelled, so that by dint of speed and a short direction, they were soon a-head of the object of their pursuit. It is due to the pursuers to say that after having run so fast and long

through mire, mud, and impediments of every kind, which in an uncultivated tract of wild country would be no slight difficulty, they would not be in so good a condition for a struggle as the beggar who was pursuing his journey in his usual unruffled manner.

Two against one however are great odds, but we will continue the narrative. The two followers having as we said, managed to get a-head of the other, secreted themselves each behind a tree by the side of the path along which the vagrant had to pass, and as soon as he came opposite them, they rushed upon him stealthily, and one of them secured his pikestaff, while the other held a naked dirk to his breast, bidding him surrender the staff, or he would bury the dagger in his heart. Thus attacked he had no alternative but to give up his weapon, which was much against his will as he saw he was in hands that would render it necessary for him to use every endeavour if escape was to be at all cared for. Notwithstanding the stoicism he had displayed to Robin, when he found himself really in danger of his life, there were not wanting symptoms of despair.

“Spare my life,” said he, “I entreat you by him that died on a tree, spare my life and remove that lurid dirk from my presence, I don’t like to see it. I am almost dead with the sight of it. Besides I am a poor beggar and never grieved you in my life, it would be a sin and unmanly to hurt so helpless a creature as I am, let me go I pray you, give me my staff and attack some one more worthy your strength and courage.”

“Thou art a liar,” said the other in reply, “notwithstanding thy assumed meekness we know thee to be a ruffian, thou hast well nigh slain the greatest yeoman that ever was born, and we have come after thee for the very purpose of taking thee back to him whom thou hast so rudely injured, and he shall decide what thy fate shall be ; but it is our will that thou hang on a tree till thy vile breath depart from thee.”

The beggar now perceived that all was wrong. His fate seemed worse than he had been aware of : nothing but ill usage, and a speedy and violent death presented themselves to his disturbed imagination. He looked around him and beheld at a distance his good pikestaff and was cheered with the sight. If, thought he, I had hold of thee again, these ruffians should hear no more supplications from me, and in the intensity of his anguish he thought he perceived some small chance for his life by appealing to their self-interest and love of gain.

“ Brave gentlemen,” said he, “ I own I have beaten a person on the road, but if you know the truth, you know that it was only in self-defence that I attacked him. He wished to rob me, and I fought and resisted him successfully, and surely you would not spill a poor beggar’s blood for this ; besides when you have slain me, what better will either you or your friend be for my death ? I am willing to make you the best recompense in my power for what I have done, and I am sure you will do yourselves more credit and good by accepting the boon I offer, than by taking away from me what no one can restore, my poor life. Listen to me I entreat

you. If you will set me at perfect liberty and allow me to proceed without further molestation, I will give you a hundred pounds, besides a quantity of odd silver which I have now with me. It is true it has taken me many years to collect it by small alms, but I will freely give it up to escape death."

"Where is the money you speak off," said his attendants.

"It is under the clouted cloak at the bottom of my poke."

The young men considering that by leaving hold of him they still would have him in their power, and might get possession of his money, consented in appearance to allow him to do as he had entreated.

Their intention was nevertheless, after he had given them the money, to put him to death immediately, and run the risk of displeasing their master, by failing to convey their prisoner to him alive. Accordingly the beggar was allowed the free use of his limbs, but he did not at once make a rush at his pikestaff. This scarcely seemed prudent at the present, and he had another idea in his brain that promised more certain success. He proceeded therefore to loose from off his shoulders his clouted cloak, which having done he opened his meal-sack, and putting his hands among the meal began to search therein for the money, his detainers meanwhile kneeling down by his side earnestly watching for the appearance of the gold. The beggar filled his hands with meal and took a quantity out of the bag, he then filled his hands again, and did likewise

but still he did not come to the money. At last he took two handfuls, and throwing it into the eyes of his oppressors, so blinded them therewith that they could not see, he then darted at his pikestaff, and seizing it, began to belabour the sides of his captors, half blinded with meal, with which article he still continued to supply their eyes, in such a manner that they were much more intent on their own safety, than in conveying to their master the person whose capture a few minutes before they had considered fully effected. The balance of power being now fairly on the side of the beggar, he knew that the best way to keep it so, was to make good use of his formidable pikestaff, which he did to the utter consternation of the aggressing party. He even mingled his blows with mirth at their expense, telling them that as their dresses were so besprinkled with flower, it was quite necessary it should be knocked off. By begreases the men got the flower out of their eyes sufficiently to enable them to see where they were, but instead of looking round for means of defence, they made use of their eyes only to enable them to see the best road for getting out of the reach of the beggar's terrible staff. Accordingly being swift of foot, they ran faster than the beggar, who was therefore obliged to forego the beating he had so lustily begun to give them.

Seeing himself in possession of the field he called aloud to the retreating foresters to stay and receive the money, as he was willing to pay them cheerfully according to agreement, and if the wind had blown a little meal upon their clothes, he would undertake to

remove it with his staff. The foresters returned him never a word, but stood looking at each other with sides and shoulders aching, till it began to grow dark, when pursuit on either side was no longer practicable.

To make a short story of a long one, the men returned to Robin in a sad disconsolate condition, and on being asked how they had succeeded, with reference to the object of their pursuit, they hung down their heads saying, "they had taken nothing but plenty of hard blows."

"Did you see his pikestaff, then," jocularly enquired Robin.

"We did indeed," was the reply, "and what further acquaintance we had with it our backs and sides can testify."

"I thought," said Robin, "when I first saw you return, you had been at the mill, as your clothes are all covered with flour."

"Not at all," said they, "but we assure you we have had plenty of meal, it was in fact the beginning of our trouble."

"How so?" said Robin.

"Why you see the wily mendicant got us to look with him into his meal-poke in search of money, which he pretended was hid therein, and while we were thinking only of the gold, he threw a handful of meal into both our eyes and thereby blinded us, and while we were in this state and not able to see our antagonist he beat us with his merciless cudgel, that had we not been swift at foot, he would soon have made us in such

a condition, that our return to the green wood would have been no longer a possibility. As it is our bones have been so basted, that we shall never like to look at either a clouted cloak or a pikestaff as long as we live."

"Bravo! for the clouted cloak, and shame upon the company of the green wood," said Robin, "we have never been served as to day, but to tell you the truth, I did not like the idea of being the only person competent to give an opinion of the thrashing properties of the pikestaff, as I should have been had you not gone in pursuit. I am indeed heartily glad you have seen the clouted cloak and tasted the beggar's tree."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ROBIN HOOD AND GUY OF GISBORNE.

THE ancient ballad bearing the title above written commences by describing the beauty of forest scenery, and the pleasure that such scenery inspires accompanied with the music of thousands of merry voices, chirping, whistling, or singing under the stimulating influence of a cheering vernal sun. On this occasion we learn that the loud woodthrush at break of early morn awoke our hero in the forest from a dream which gave him considerable uneasiness. Having thus

awoke he summoned his every day companion Little John into his presence, and told him how he had dreamt of two stout yeomen who had come to fight him, and how they had beaten him and taken his bow from him, and continued Robin, "if I live I'll be avenged of them both before long."

"Dreams," said Little John quite philosophically, "are swift, light things—light, swift and unmeaning as the wind, which to day may be all violence and bluster, and to-morrow calm as the breath of a summer's eve."

The speech and advice of Little John failed to pacify his master, as he ordered his men forthwith to be prepared for any sudden alarm that might arise, and took Little John with him into the forest with the view of ascertaining whether any thing uncommon was imminent. For a considerable time nothing appeared to disturb the graceful dignity and repose of the forest. The trees were in the pride of their beauty, sublime in their strength and silent grandeur. At length they saw standing by the side of a lofty oak a tall sturdy-looking yeoman. A sword hung by his side, a dagger was in his belt, and in his hand he bore a long strong bow. He had a somewhat shaggy appearance, for he was covered from head to foot with the skin of a horse, on which the tail and the mane were conspicuous objects.

"Stand you here, master," said Little John, "under the shade of this tree, and I will go to yonder tall fellow and learn what he is about."

This proposition made Robin, contrary to his usual manner, rather peevish. Whether it was that he had

not forgot the little account his companion made of the dream he had related to him, or whether he was affronted at Little John for wanting to give instructions the tendency of which was to keep him away from the thing which of all others he loved, namely, a little excitement in the shape of a quarrel, cannot now be determined, but he answered Little John by saying :—

“ Hast thou been so long with me, and dost thou not know that it is not my plan to send my men before me into danger, I would break thy head with my bow for thy conceit, were it not that I might snap the weapon at the same time.”

Little John on his side was now irritated, and turned away from his master without speaking a word, and went into Barnsdale alone. He was in great heaviness on account of the angry words of his master and the situation in which he had left him ; but he found additional cause of trouble before he had travelled far, as will be seen by the following events.

While he was thus proceeding in a moody state of feeling he stumbled upon two of his companions or fellow foresters, lying dead in their gore newly slain, and he had no sooner noticed them, than he saw Will Scarlett flying with all speed from the sheriff of Nottingham and a band of seven score followers. It does not seem Scarlett and he took any measures in concert, or even that the pursued recognised the presence of a friendly arm so near at hand.

Little John, notwithstanding the dangers by which he saw himself surrounded, resolved to shoot an arrow

at the proud sheriff, relying on the certainty of his aim and thinking that if he could slay the leader, his followers would retire of their own accord.

Accordingly he drew his bow and shot, but the arrow did not take effect as he intended, he however killed one of the sheriff's attendants named William-a-Trent, but loudly and bitterly did the marksman complain of the treacherous bow that had thus failed him in time of his pressing necessity.

“Wo worth thee, wicked wood,” said he, “that ever thou grewest on a tree. Thou that shouldst have been my friend and my boon, art now become my bane. Had it not been for the trust I placed in thee, my heels ere now had found for me a place of safety, but now I am undone and there is no escape.”

These piteous lamentations of Little John but too truly depicted his present condition, he had allowed himself to be surrounded by the followers of the sheriff, and he was consequently taken prisoner at once.

The sheriff knowing that the prisoner had slain one of his followers resolved not to put the captive to immediate death, but to secure him till further leisure should allow him to take such steps in making an example of him in the manner more mature deliberation should suggest. Accordingly he tied him to a tree and told him, as a subject on which to meditate, that in his fate he would at least be hanged and drawn.

Leaving therefore Little John fast bound to a tree, waiting the sad fate that had been promised, we return to Robin and the tall yeoman clad in the shaggy hide of a horse.

After the retirement of Little John, Robin walked up to the stranger and addressed him in courteous terms bidding him good morning, and intimating that he doubted not he was a skilful archer by the style of his bow.

The stranger feeling that it was necessary to say something in reply to this civil salutation answered by saying he was at a loss to learn anything about his present locality, as the business on which he had entered the forest rendered it necessary that he should know precisely in what part of it he then was, that he might know how and where to proceed in the furtherance of his object.

“I will give thee all the information thou seekest,” replied Robin, “not only as to this locality, but likewise, if thou thinkest proper to make me further acquainted with thy purpose, any assistance I am able, to help thee to succeed in the same.”

The stranger thanked him for his civility and proffered aid, and in order to avail himself of it told him freely that he was engaged on behalf of the sheriff of Nottingham to seek out and apprehend a troublesome fellow, a stealer of the king's deer and a general outlaw known by the name of Robin Hood; and gladly, continued the tall stranger, would I give forty pounds to have the said robber under my finger and thumb.

“I shall be able to assist thee I make no doubt,” said our hero, “but as I see by thy equipments thou art an archer, I should first like to have a little pastime with thee in shooting at a mark.

To this request the stranger consented, although it seemed to Robin that he would rather have gone forward in pursuit of the person whose capture he was engaged to effect. To satisfy him therefore for the loss of time which the practice suggested would occasion to the stranger, Robin told him that they were then at a place where it was by no means unlikely the outlaw whom he sought might shortly be seen, so that observed he, you will lose no time in that case by enjoying with me the sport of shooting at a mark. The stranger therefore freely consented, and Robin cut up two thorn briars and fixed them at a long distance attaching there to a garland, and then stepped back to his companion to commence the trial.

It was our hero's practice to yield the precedence to any one with whom he contended in his favourite art, and he tried on this occasion to urge the stranger to take the lead but without effect. Robin therefore drew a good bow and came within an inch of the centre of the mark. The stranger then shot and although he did very well Robin's was the better arrow. The second arrow discharged by the stranger struck within the garland, but Robin's actually clave the wand. Such shooting called forth loud applause from Robin's competitor, who, whether at all suspicious that the person then present was Robin himself it does not appear, declared that if his heart was as good as his hand, not even Robin Hood himself could surpass him.

"Hast thou any objections," said the stranger, "to tell me thy name."

“I will tell thee,” said the outlaw, “when thou hast told me thine.”

“Most readily,” said the other, “I dwell by the side of the down and the dale, my name is Guy of Gisborne, and my occupation is as I have told thee already an apprehender of outlaws, and I, am at the present sworn to take Robin Hood, and now pray be good enough to give me thy name and calling with equal truth and candour.”

“I rarely break my promise,” said the outlaw, “and as I have already consented, I now tell thee, that I am the self same Robin Hood whom thou art seeking, and if thou hast further business with me fulfil thy commission.”

The eyes of the stranger rested on Robin for one moment, and the next he stood before him with his sword in his hand, prepared to give him a deadly blow, had not Robin who expected nothing less, drawn his with equal promptitude, and fenced off the blow with admirable dexterity. The strife now became obstinate, As for Robin he knew he was fighting for his life, and with one worthy his own good weapon, whom to defeat and even slay, he considered it a positive duty, especially as he had acknowledged himself his sworn pursuer. On the other hand Guy had the opportunity he had so long been seeking. His fortune or disgrace was on the point of being completed. The sheriff he knew was at no great distance, and he felt all his heroism kindled within him at the thought of being able to carry away from that secluded arena the head of him who had so

long and so often illuded the most elaborate stratagems. Thus stimulated on either side the assailants almost roared with fury as they gave and parried blows intended to be mortal. For two long hours the fight continued without any decided advantage to either. Robin had the misfortune to stumble against the root of a tree, and only just missed the blow which his adversary at that critical moment had meant to terminate the conflict. This mishap so far from dispiriting the heart of our hero, seemed only to quicken his energies, as he sprang forward with the freshness and vigour of one that is determined to conquer.

“It was never the destiny of any man,” said Robin “to die before his time,” and elated with that sentiment, and the failure of his adversary’s sword during his stumble, he dealt a blow on the head of Guy which smote him to the ground, a dead man.

Robin then thanking our lady, cut off the head of his fallen foe, and said, “thou hast been a traitor long enough, thy doom is fixed.”

The business of our hero was not yet finished. He took off the horse’s skin from the dead man, his horn and his other equipments, and put them on himself, covering the trunk of Guy with his own cast-off garments. He then took the horn belonging to Guy and blew it till echos were heard for miles all round. It reached the ears of the sheriff, who immediately recognised it as the horn of Guy, and concluded that he had either captured or slain Robin Hood. At this the company of the sheriff began to be merry and amuse

themselves as if fully assured that their great object was accomplished, and that the fox which had so frequently escaped all kinds of snares was at last taken by his sworn destroyer, Guy of Gisborne. Meanwhile Robin hastened in the direction of the sheriff and company, attracted by the loud cheers which they had raised in honour of the event.

Robin felt it to be his duty to proceed as cautiously as possible, in order to ascertain what the cause of this rejoicing might be, especially as he felt assured the party was numerous. Accordingly he went in a direction towards them by a way which he knew would conceal his approach, in order that, if he found it necessary, he might retreat with safety and summon additional force. By these means he was enabled to come within sight of the sheriff's company, and inspect their proceedings before they were aware of his presence. He soon perceived how matters stood. Little John was still a prisoner tied to a tree, and the company of the sheriff in wild disorder, intoxicated with the tidings which they had been taught to believe the horn of Guy betokened. He resolved therefore whatever might ensue to release his devoted friend Little John, and as he was dressed in the horse's skin in which he had found Guy, and was likewise in possession of his horn, he imagined it be no difficult matter to pass himself off for that individual, at least till he had effected the release of their captive. Intent on this purpose then he walked boldly towards them and again blew the horn to direct the attention of the sheriff. The moment the horn

sounded the latter looked up, and beheld Robin whom he too to be Guy of Gisborne.

“Hast thou seen Robin Hood?” said the sheriff, coming in advance of his men to speak to the supposed Guy.

“I have seen him,” said our hero, “and what will please thee better still, I have been fighting him with this good sword for the space of two hours, and have cut off his head and yonder he lies clad in his hateful green.”

Loud cheers were the response given to this announcement, and the sheriff’s men in eager haste ran in the direction Robin pointed, to see with their own eyes the dead body of the famous Robin Hood.

“This is a proud day for us,” said the sheriff, “I too have slain already two of the company, and yonder tied to a tree is another whom I have reserved for a similar fate.”

“I claim the honour of slaying him,” answered the disguised outlaw. “The arm that has vanquished the chief has the greater right to slay the servant. Allow me the pleasure.”

“It is granted,” said the sheriff, at the same time stepping forward as if to accompany him to the victim.

“I shall take his shrift,” said the supposed Guy, “and it is not usual for a third person to hear it.”

The sheriff thus rebuked stood still, and allowed the other to go alone. It is scarcely necessary to say how welcome was the arrival of the outlaw to the eyes of Little John, who recognised his master in spite of his shaggy covering.

As soon as Robin reached his companion he put the bow of the fallen Guy into his hands together with a sheaf of arrows ; a very different mode of proceeding from what the sheriff, who stood looking on at a distance, had expected. Robin and his companion however, understood each other perfectly, and Little John convinced the sheriff in a very few minutes that he was not making his last shrift, as that expert bowman, once again at liberty, with a good bow in his hand discharged arrows in all directions, with such fatal precision that the sheriff comprehended the ruse that Robin had practised on him, and thus disheartened and baffled his courage forsook him, and he and his followers were but too happy to save themselves by flight in the greatest possible confusion.

All became immediately convinced there had been a mistake, and instead of Guy of Gisborne having slain the outlaw, this individual before them had been the death of the other, as he was not only in possession of his horn and sword, but even clad in the identical shaggy horse's skin which he had worn, articles these which they unanimously declared the living Guy would never have surrendered. Disaster is always discouraging, and so it proved to the sheriff, as he directed his steps in eager haste towards Nottingham.

Little John however could not feel happy till he had reached the sheriff with an arrow, which after repeated trials he at length effected. The distance was nevertheless too great to cause the shaft to be fatal, besides it only entered that fleshy part of the body, which in

the present day is usually covered by the tail of the coat, so that it would only serve as a disagreeable memento of the change of fortune to which he had been subjected on the day when he went in pursuit of bold Robin Hood.

CHAPTER XXX.

ROBIN HOOD RESCUING WILL STUTLEY.

ALTHOUGH the company of the green wood amounted according to the general tone of the songs in which their actions are recorded to more than seven score men, the names of not more than half a score have been handed down to us. Will Stutley is one of that distinguished few, and according to the ballad here transposed, he was on one occasion taken by the legal authorities, cast into prison, condemned, and on the point of being hanged. The particulars of his capture and trial do not appear, but an account of his rescue is handed down to us in substance as follows.

While Robin was in the woods pursuing his pleasure as usual, he was one day disturbed by a report that reached him, stating that Will Stutley was about to be hanged for stealing the king's deer, and in self defence killing two of the officers of justice engaged in taking him.

No sooner was Robin fully aware that one of his principal men was in such peril, than he rose and gathered his men together, and bound them by a special oath to attempt his rescue. They did this, and in so doing made it well understood to each other that they would succeed too, or at least cause the death of many a gallant wight. To give the thing greater importance in the eyes of his men, Robin arrayed himself in a suit of military scarlet, and ordered his men all to be clad in their best livery of bright green.

It was a fine sight we are told, to see these active foresters march along, flushed with the hopes of gaining additional renown, and rescuing one of their number from the iron grasp of the law.

When they came within sight of the castle in which Stutley was confined, Robin stopped them and told them he considered it more prudent for them to remain in ambush, and to send one of their band to a palmer, a sort of monk, whom they beheld near the walls of the castle, to learn when the execution was expected to take place.

On hearing this a young man one of their number, stept forth and volunteered his services on that errand. He was accordingly dispatched to the palmer, of whom when he came up to him, he enquired at what time the outlaw Will was to be hanged.

“Alas ! alas !” said the palmer much concerned, “he is to die to day on yonder gallows tree. Would that his brave master knew his misfortune, I am sure he would send some of his bold yeomen, who would release him from his distressing situation.”

“I agree with thee,” said the young man, “I agree with thee that if Robin Hood knew what was going to take place, there would be something to do, but fare thee well good old man, I think I can promise thee that if Stutley is hanged to day, his death will not be unrevenged.”

The young man had only just left off speaking with the palmer, and returned to his own companions, when the gates of the castle opened, and out came poor Will, guarded on every side by bands of hirelings or retainers of the sheriff.

When Will found himself on the outer side of the castle walls, and felt the warming influence of the cheerful sunshine—that lights as freely and as fully on the poor condemned culprit, as it does on the countenance of his judge—all his love of life returned, and he fancied in spite of the force that surrounded him, had he only the free use of his limbs, and a sword in his hand, there would be some small chance for his life, or at all events he would die like a brave man.

Penetrated with these sentiments he applied in suppliant terms to the sheriff, beseeching him that since he must die, he might be allowed to leave the world in a different manner than on the gallows.

“Hanging,” said he, “is not the death of a man, but of a dog. Loose my hands and give me a sword, and surely enough I shall be slain, one against so many. It would be a disgrace to the company to which I belong for me to be hanged, none of my master’s men have hitherto left the world by a death so ignominious.

I pray thee therefore , oh, powerful sheriff, to change this mode of dying, for one more becoming a free-born child of the forest."

His petition was however disregarded. The sheriff unrelenting and stern, ordered him to be hanged ; it would not do to put a sword again into the hands of one who had already slain two men engaged in capturing him.

" Loose my hands then," said Will, " and I will dispense with a sword, only loose my hands and if after that I am hanged to day, let damnation be my doom."

" It cannot be," said the sheriff, " dost thou see that gallows ? on that thou shalt die, and I rejoice at being the means of putting an end to one of thy fraternity, and if it ever happen to me to be able to serve thy master in the same manner, his chance of respite will be no better than thine."

" Thou art a dastard, a poor paltry coward," said Will passionately, " and ownest only the heart of a slave. Talk of hanging my master ! vain, weak, law-made functionary, if ever it happen, a thing quite possible, that my kind master be able to lay his hands on thee, he will not forget the cowardice and cruelty, which thou hast this day displayed to poor Will ; but in spite of the gallows before my eyes, I am more a man than thou, proudly as thou carriest thy head by the side of thy armed followers ; and as for bold Robin, let me tell thee as one that knows him, that he holds both thee and thy mercenary minions in utter contempt and abhorrence, and had he been informed of this my mis-

fortune, thou wouldst this day have been more reasonable, I know thou wouldst."

By this time they had conducted Will to the foot of the gallows, and he was about to bid adieu to the attractions and loveliness of a world whose natural endearments he knew how to value, when up stepped Little John to Will, saying, "I pray thee friend not to depart from us without taking leave of thy dear companions. Surely master sheriff, you will allow me to borrow him a short time for an object so desirable and deserving."

"Have at thee, rogue," said the sheriff, "I doubt not but thou art as great a rebel as the one just going to be hanged. Take him my men, take the new stranger into custody, we will teach him to display his impudence before officers of justice, and in the face of the gallows, take him into custody."

The sheriff's men were however too late, for before that officer had ended his dignified orders, Little John had by a desperate rush and unflinching resolution, undone the cords by which the hands of the prisoner had been bound, and having snatched a sword from one of the men, put it into the hands of Stutley, saying—"Here, Will, take this, thou wilt use it better than the person would who has lost it."

The action after this was the fiercest imaginable and the stake tremendous. Stutley and Little John were not fighting for honour, but for their lives. Each armed with a good sword they stood back to back, cutting down with superhuman strength all who dared to approach.

Stutley was more like a roaring lion than a man, so formidable did he become, just released from the terror of an ugly gallows, and backed by his old friend, who kept assuring him for his consolation that Robin was at hand.

During the time that these two were fighting, and no other aid on their side making its appearance, the sheriff kept encouraging his men to face the two desperate rebels as he termed them, thinking that, although he saw his men fall singly as fast as they went within the reach of the two companions, numbers must eventually prevail.

By and by an arrow was seen passing over the heads of the throng, which to the eyes of the sheriff was dreadfully significant, his colour immediately forsook his face, and he looked around panic-stricken, assured that it was the harbinger of more formidable antagonists.

And now a murmur was heard among the bystanders and an alarm given that Robin Hood and a great number of bowmen were just at hand.

“I feared this,” said the sheriff, “I feared this, I know they will all aim at me. It is not safe for me to remain longer. I hope however you my men will go on with the execution, I had intended to remain till it was over but for those dangerous arrows.”

It was a vain and a foolish idea of the sheriff, to suppose that when he had admitted there was danger in remaining, his men would think otherwise. They were too good judges of the value of their respective lives, to remain when they had witnessed the effect the

sight of the flying arrow, and the approach of a large company of hostile bowmen had on the conduct of their leader. They immediately dispersed on all sides.

Stutley seeing the sheriff, the officers and attendants leaving Little John and himself alone, and knowing likewise the cause of their departure, could not forbear calling aloud to them, the sheriff especially, and reminding him of his late wish to lay hands on Robin Hood, by saying he would never succeed in catching him unless he could dare to meet him when he was near. The love of life however prevailed over the consciousness of disgrace, as it invariably does with all except the noblest natures. By the time therefore that Robin and his company had fairly reached the place no one was to be seen but Stutley and John.

“I am sorry for this,” said our hero, “I had certainly expected to have something to do for my sword and it is now useless. I might in fact have been as well without it.”

There was however one among them that made no complaint at all. This was Will Stutley who seemed as if he never would have done giving tokens of the gratitude that was kindled within him, on account of this very seasonable assistance. He looked at the naked gallows that still frowned above their heads and then at his friends till tears started into his eyes.

“I shall never forget it,” said he, “little did I think when I came to this place this morning without a friendly eye to cheer me, that Little John and you my dear master were so near at hand. Little did I

imagine that yon boasting cruel sheriff would be so soon sent away afraid of fulfilling the duties of his office, by which he is so inflated, but the coward is gone and I am free, thanks to my friends ; free to return again to the green wood, where more sharply than ever shall be heard the twang of my good bowstring ; and now boys once more for the merry green wood."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE NOBLE FISHERMAN, OR ROBIN HOOD'S PREFERMENT.

E have already seen Robin Hood as a butcher, a potter, and a courtier, but here is an occupation, considering his inland habits, that seems one of the least likely to be adopted, namely, that of a fisherman ; but so it is recorded. It was in summer time—Robin was fond of summer when the woods are most inviting—that our hero's caprice prompted him to try for a short time the life of a seaman. The reason alleged is singular, namely, that for once he had grown weary of killing the fallow deer ; he is likewise said to have asserted as a farther motive that fishermen were much more wealthy than merchants, and therefore he was determined to go to Scarbrough and try his fortune as a fisherman. In accordance therefore with this resolution he summoned his men, and telling them his

intention, invited any of them that had any gold to spend, to spend it cheerfully with him.

Having then made such arrangements in the company as he deemed needful, he proceeded direct for Scarbrough, and took up his abode at the house of a widow hard by the side of the sea. The widow as was natural enquired his name and profession, and here Robin violated the truth as to both these particulars. His name he told her was Simon over the Lea, and his calling that of an honest fisherman.

“In that case,” said the widow, “if thou wilt enter my service, I will engage to give thee good wages, as I possess as fine a fishing craft as any that sails on the sea.”

Robin of course willingly accepted the offer, and in a day or two the vessel was fully manned and set sail to a fishing station. It scarcely needs to be told that our hero was not at home here. Having never been before engaged in such a manner, he gained nothing but abuse from the master of the vessel, and no wonder, for while others baited their hooks and caught fish in abundance. Robin cast in his hooks unbaited and consequently caught nothing.

“This lubber,” said the master, “would be better at home, he is not worth his room in the vessel,” and even his fellow workmen laughed him to scorn.

Robin felt this ridicule keenly, and bitterly did he regret the change he had made.

“Would that I were in Plompton Park again,” said he, “chasing the fallow deer, I should then be a match

for any of them, but there is nothing for my good bow to do here though I have it with me, I am a laughing stock for the rudest seaman on board. The sea is not my element, and if ever I set my foot again on mother earth, they shall never laugh at me again as a fisherman."

At length the vessel weighed anchor and set sail towards the shore, when a French vessel of war was seen bearing down upon them in a suspicious and threatening manner. All on board except Robin were greatly concerned at this spectacle, but to him a skirmish or a battle was a thing devoutly to be wished, as in that case he felt assured he could be useful. The master of the vessel exclaimed, as he perceived they had no chance of escaping the war vessel which was nearing them rapidly, that all the fruits of their toil were then worse than useless, as they would assuredly be taken prisoners, and probably have to go and pine away the remainder of their lives in French prisons.

"Don't be afraid, master," said Robin, "things are not so bad as you imagine. Look here I have brought my bow with me, and a good sheaf of arrows, and I shall be very much surprised, if, so long as I have this in my hand, any Frenchman enters this vessel of ours alive."

"All that's fine talking of yours, and if you be as good a marksman as fisherman, you will no doubt effect wonders. For my part, as far as you are concerned, I should prefer the space you occupy to your presence, as a piece of more useless lumber never yet cumbered a craft."

Robin felt incensed at this rebuke, but knew that to a certain extent it was merited, but he nevertheless inwardly rejoiced as he saw the hostile vessel getting nearer to them. His whole soul was fired with the desire to place himself on more estimable terms with his fellows. There was only one way of doing this, namely, by valuable services. The opportunity for such services was at hand, as the French vessel was within bow-shot of the craft. Robin took hold of his bow and determined to be in time, feeling convinced that he would do execution therewith at a greater distance than any archer on the enemy's deck, accordingly as soon as he felt sure of his distance he drew the arrow to its very head, twang whistled the bowstring and in a moment the arrow was buried in the heart of a Frenchman. This was only the beginning of the battle, seizing another arrow he took a cool steady aim and sent it to a home similar to that of its fellow: and thus Robin, the only bowman on board, kept shooting till not a living Frenchman was to be seen on the vessel. And now in the place of reproach nothing was to be heard in the craft but cheers and applause at the unparalleled execution effected by the bow of Robin.

The captain, or as he is termed, the master, was the most hearty of any in giving the palm to him who had deserved it and won it. In conclusion they boarded the enemy's vessel and proceeded to plunder it, as there was no longer any one left to defend it. They found among the various treasure on board specie to the amount of twelve thousand pounds, an immense sum in those days.

“This all belongs to you,” said the master, addressing Robin, “not a farthing of this should we have touched but for your surprising bow, nay, instead of this, our lot would have been a narrow berth in this vessel and a voyage to France, whence we should never have returned again to the shores of old England; it is all yours.”

“If indeed,” said Robin, “you thus determine, my will is that the half of this money be given to the kind hearted lady, the widow, in whose service I am engaged, for the benefit of her orphan children, and as to the rest, I will bestow it to you my fellows in peril.”

“This shall not be,” said the master, “we will not enjoy the fruit of another man’s labour. The first half may go as you wish, since so you are disposed, but not a franc shall be received by any of us. It is yours, nobly bravely won in battle, and you alone shall enjoy it.”

“Let it be so then,” answered Robin, “I will take it and build with it a home for the destitute.”

And thus ends the ballad of the noble fisherman.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ROBIN HOOD'S DELIGHT.

T chanced upon a time, as the authority whence we derive our materials asserts, that Robin Hood and his two distinguished comrades, Little John and Will Scarlet, would go out a walking in pursuit of pleasure. The day in question was midsummer day, and while they were thus passing their time enjoying themselves in the forest, then in the zenith of its attractions, they stumbled upon three other stout tall persons likewise clad in green, and loitering about in lazy pastime. The strangers had each at his side a long falchion, and in his hand each carried a long forest bill.

On seeing our three outlaws, the strangers called out to know the object that had brought them into the forest.

“That is a bold question,” returned Robin, “nay, what right have you to ask it of us, or expect we shall answer.”

“The right of our office,” replied the others, “we being as you must know keepers of the king’s deer.”

“As we must know you say, that is a thing we shall never either know or endeavour to learn, since we happen to be in that capacity ourselves, that is to say

we are keepers in this forest, and if you dispute our authority, we have it here at our sides, in the shape of well-tempered steel."

"We thought no less," said the other, "you are then outlaws, and in possession of no right to range in this forest except that which you have taken upon yourselves, and of which it is our duty and will soon be our pleasure to divest you."

"You speak well," returned Robin, "we shall at least have no dispute as to the terms on which we treat. If we beat you, then are we properly qualified keepers in this forest, and if you beat us, then are we indeed outlaws, and I in particular will never be ashamed to own that I am called Robin Hood."

This admission on the part of Robin stimulated the desire of the strangers to come to close quarters with the others, as they knew they would not only acquire great celebrity by capturing the chief of outlaws, but would be entitled to a reward which had long been offered to any one who would bring him to justice.

Both parties after these preliminaries had been discussed and settled walked up towards each other, and met severally prepared to do battle. Each of the strangers singled out his man, and to battle they went, sword in one hand and buckler in the other. It was as we said on midsummer day, and they fought, according to the old black letter copy of this ballad, from eight in the morning till past two in the afternoon, in most gallant style, and yet none of them had fallen, nor had any one intimated that it was time to end the

quarrel, however, earnestly they might have wished it.

At length Robin himself cried out, “you are stout, valiant men, and well qualified for your post, I will just wait one moment and blow this horn of mine, and then we will fight a little longer.”

“That is no part of our bargain,” said the other, “but as regards the blowing of thy horn, it will neither do us good nor harm, therefore blow away and come to thy post again.”

Robin blew his horn, but instead of going up to his opponent as he had said, he began to loiter.

His opponent observing this called out to him either to come and fight, or yield the day: adding that for his part he would never desist so long as the former dared to meet him.

“If that be thy intention,” said Robin, still no way desirous to renew the attack, “have the goodness to tell me your names, and then in the forest of merry Sherwood you shall be famous so long as the name of bold Robin is spoken with deference.”

“Our names,” replied the other, “in this forest are of no moment: here deeds, and not words, are to decide true valour.”

“That is nobly spoken,” again said Robin. “We will fight you no longer; we own you are conquerors, and qualified keepers in this forest; and as for the present, being persuaded you will not object, I propose that we all walk over to Nottingham, and there in a butt of sack finish the battle, which shall be at my expense, since I love to entertain men of valour such as

you have this day proved yourselves to be. You have reached the full standard of excellence, that is to fight on and never flee."

The three strangers, warmed with the liberal offer of the chief outlaw, agreed to accept his invitation, and in a cup of sack to merge all their feuds. Accordingly thither they hied, and for the three following days kept up the carousal: and as the song expressly words it, 'drank themselves good friends.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ROBIN HOOD RESCUING THE WIDOW'S THREE SONS
FROM THE SHERIFF.

IN the month of May, Robin Hood on his way to Nottingham fell in with an old woman who was grieving piteously.

Robin, always open to the tale of distress, asked feelingly what was the cause of her sorrow, and learnt in reply that three of her sons were that day about to be hanged.

"Hanged!" said Robin, "and for what? Have they been setting fire to villages, and slaying their ministers? Have they been injuring virgins, or trespassing on the conjugal rights of their neighbours?"

“Alas! sir, no: it is for none of these; they have destroyed neither property nor person by fire, neither have they violated the sacred precincts of domestic life; but they been stealers of the king’s deer, and this is the only charge that can be laid against them.”

“I remember,” said Robin, “yes, I remember both thee and thy sons. Dost thou not recognise me whom thou allowedst to sup and dine at thy cottage, and from thy table? I will try what can be done.”

Leaving, therefore, the old woman, Robin hastened towards Nottingham, and as he travelled in haste he overtook a pilgrim palmer, and likewise enquired of him what news.

The palmer replied by saying that three squires, as he understood, were that day going to be hanged at Nottingham.

“It is then indeed so,” said Robin. “Well, now come, change dresses with me, and I will give thee forty shillings in silver, with which thou mayst regale thyself as best thou likest with ale or wine.”

“Forty shillings! and thy good apparel for mine,” answered the palmer, “and mine all rags. You are trying to make game of me, but do not I pray thee fair gentleman; go where thou mayst, but do not laugh an old man to scorn, but rather pity and assist him.”

“We shall assist each other,” said Robin, “only be quick and replace thy dress with mine, and take hold of this money.”

The old man could scarcely give credit to the reality of the offer, but as he had already fingered the money,

made the best speed in his power to serve our hero.

After Robin had thus got himself completely rigged out, and beheld the strange appearance this change of dress had given him, he observed that 'it is good clothes that make the man.' It was, however, no time for idle sentiment, and this Robin knew well, he therefore made the best of his way to Nottingham, where he presently saw the sheriff walking proudly about the town. In character with the dress he had assumed, our hero walked up to the sheriff, saying,—

"May Christ save and protect you, oh sheriff; may Christ save you; what will you give to an old man in poverty to be the hangsmen on the occasion of to-day?"

"We give," replied the sheriff, "the suits of the robbers, three suits of green, and the regular hangsmen's fee, thirteen-pence, besides." Robin, at the mention of the suits of green, sprang on one side with great emotion.

"Thou art a nimble old man!" cried the sheriff, "dost thou accept the office? the reward is certain."

"I think not," answered Robin. "I never was a hangsmen in my life, and I fear I could not relish the calling. My soul shudders at the thought of these three men terminating their active existence in a manner so degrading. I will however blow this little horn of mine as an appeal to heaven for the rest of their souls." Putting the horn to his mouth as he uttered the words, and blowing three long plaintive blasts.

It was a wonderful horn that which Robin Hood carried, as it brought on this occasion (if the records

are to be trusted) between one and two hundred bold bowmen to the feet of the meanly-clad pilgrim.

At the sight of the large company of foresters the sheriff started, and with looks of astonishment mingled with fear, enquired of Robin who these foresters were, and on what business they had come.

“ Oh they are only my men ; they have come to give their opinion as to the propriety of hanging the three squires,” said Robin ; “ and if an opinion of mine is worth any thing, I am persuaded they will decide against a practice so cruel, revolting, and barbarous. What is your opinion ! ”

“ My opinion at the present,” said the sheriff, with trepidation, “ is much like yours, I admit ; and if these three men will satisfy those rough-looking bowmen, they are welcome to take them away with them.”

There are two versions in song relating to this transaction : one of them has it that the foresters were appeased with the giving up of the prisoners, and returned quietly with them to the woods ; the other, that, fired with revenge for the attempt that had been made to bring to an ignominious death some of their own fraternity, they seized the sheriff and hanged him on the gallows erected for the others. Any opinion as to the greater probability of these conflicting stories would be worth little. For the sake of the honour and humanity of the company, we rather incline to think the former version the more correct, and guided by the same motives we feel assured our readers will do the same.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROBIN HOOD'S DEATH AND BURIAL.

IN one or two of the preceding chapters, some not very distinct account of the death of Robin Hood has been given.

The one which we are about to embody in this chapter, is from an old ballad expressly written on the particulars of his tragical end. Any discrepancies in the different accounts will not strike the reader as being unaccountable mistakes, when he considers that these different versions would be written by different parties, who wrote them independently of each other. Tradition and rumour seldom fail to add materials to a story that do not strictly belong to it, and although in regard to Robin Hood's death we find one author asserting that it was a prior that bled him, and another declaring it was a prioress, we are not disposed to think from this discrepancy that wilful misrepresentation has been attempted by either. On the contrary we rest satisfied that he was bled to death, and that in all probability in a religious house. It would be presumptuous in us to give any opinion professedly our own on the claims to credibility which one writer has over another in this particular. Suffice it to say that the statements contained in this ballad are considered more in accordance with facts than the rest, nor are these statements inter-

mixed with others which are known to be incorrect, as some of the others undoubtedly are.

In point of authenticity and plausibility then, we are not unwilling to declare that this short ballad relating to the death of our hero carries with it our approbation and sympathy in its claims to credibility. Without further preface, therefore, we give the particulars herein contained:—

Whilst Robin Hood and Little John were traversing some banks of broom on a shooting excursion, the former observed to his companion, that, “though there were many shots, he was unable to make one shot more, as his good right hand failed to give to the arrows their wonted velocity, from its inability to draw the string; but,” added he, “I have a cousin at Kirkley to whom I will immediately hasten, that she may relieve me by letting blood, an art in which I know she excels.” Away, therefore, to Kirkley Hall he hurried, and having knocked at the door, his cousin herself admitted him. The reception he met with from this fair relative was apparently kind, as she invited him to have some beer, to which he replied that “he would neither eat nor drink till she had bled him.”

“I will do it for thee willingly,” replied the lady, “if thou wilt just walk into my private room.”

Robin obeyed, and following his cousin into this private apartment had a vein opened, from which the lady caused his blood to flow all that day and till noon of the following; having even locked the door of the room so that he could not escape.

As was natural, by this time Robin had grown very feeble ; he opened the casement, but found his limbs unable to surmount the obstacles there presenting themselves in an attempt to get out. Reduced to this extremity, Robin at length had recourse to the instrument that had been the means of extricating him from many a difficulty, namely his horn, which he put to his mouth, and blew with all the little remaining strength which he possessed. Little John, his best bosom friend, although not daring uninvited to enter the nunnery, had lingered about, anxious to learn that his master's health was restored, no sooner heard the blast of the well-known bugle than he resolved at all hazards to go to his master. He was sitting in a melancholy mood under a green tree when the sound struck his quick ear. To the hall, therefore, he immediately hurried, and would be delayed by no obstacle till he found his beloved master. Locks and bolts in the house immediately gave way at his approach. At last he found him ; and seeing the countenance of his master and friend lately so cheerful and benignant, now ghastly and haggard, he fell on his knees and embraced him, saying,—

“ Oh ! my dear master, is it thus ? Grant me, I pray thee, one favour : give me leave to burn this establishment to the ground ! ”

“ No ! my friend, no ! that must not be ; that boon—even *thy* boon—I cannot grant. Thou knowest me well ; thou knowest it has been a principle religiously observed by me, never to injure a woman, nor a man in

woman's company. Never in my life have I injured a female, nor will I now at the end of my career; but put, I pray thee, into my hand a bent bow and a broad arrow, and let me pull the string once more, and where the arrow lighteth, there let my grave be dug. Put for me under my head a green grass sod, and another at my feet; and lay by my side in my grave a good bent bow that has often produced the music which my soul has loved. Make my grave of gravel and green, neither scant in length nor breadth, I have ever loved freedom; and there let me lie under the verdant turf, that when strangers come to my resting-place they may say as they look upon it:—‘Here lies Robin Hood.’”

“Now my friend, my dear companion, faithful to the last, once more take hold of my hand; I have told thee all that I require, the chilly dews of night are settling on my brow,—my eyes are growing dim in the mist,—the day is ended,—let me retire—”

He spoke thus, and fell asleep.

* * * * *

These commands of Robin, the ballad concludes by saying, were attended to by his faithful friend, Little John, who buried him where the arrow dropt, near to fair Kirklees, according to the wish of the departed.

FINIS.

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